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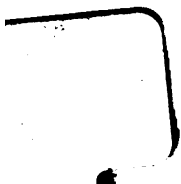
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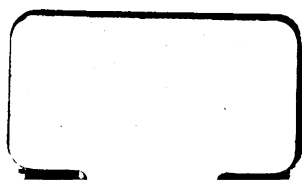
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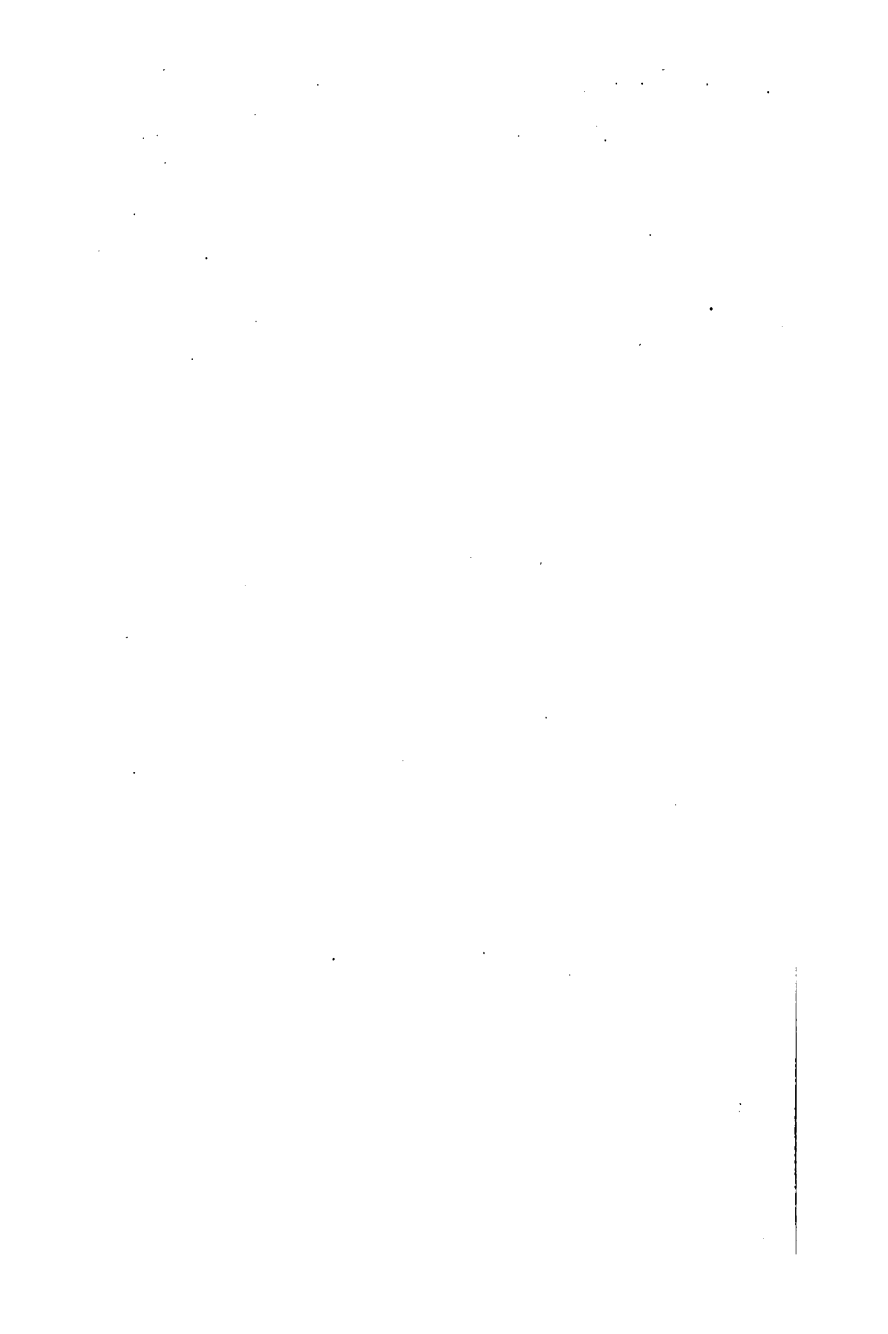
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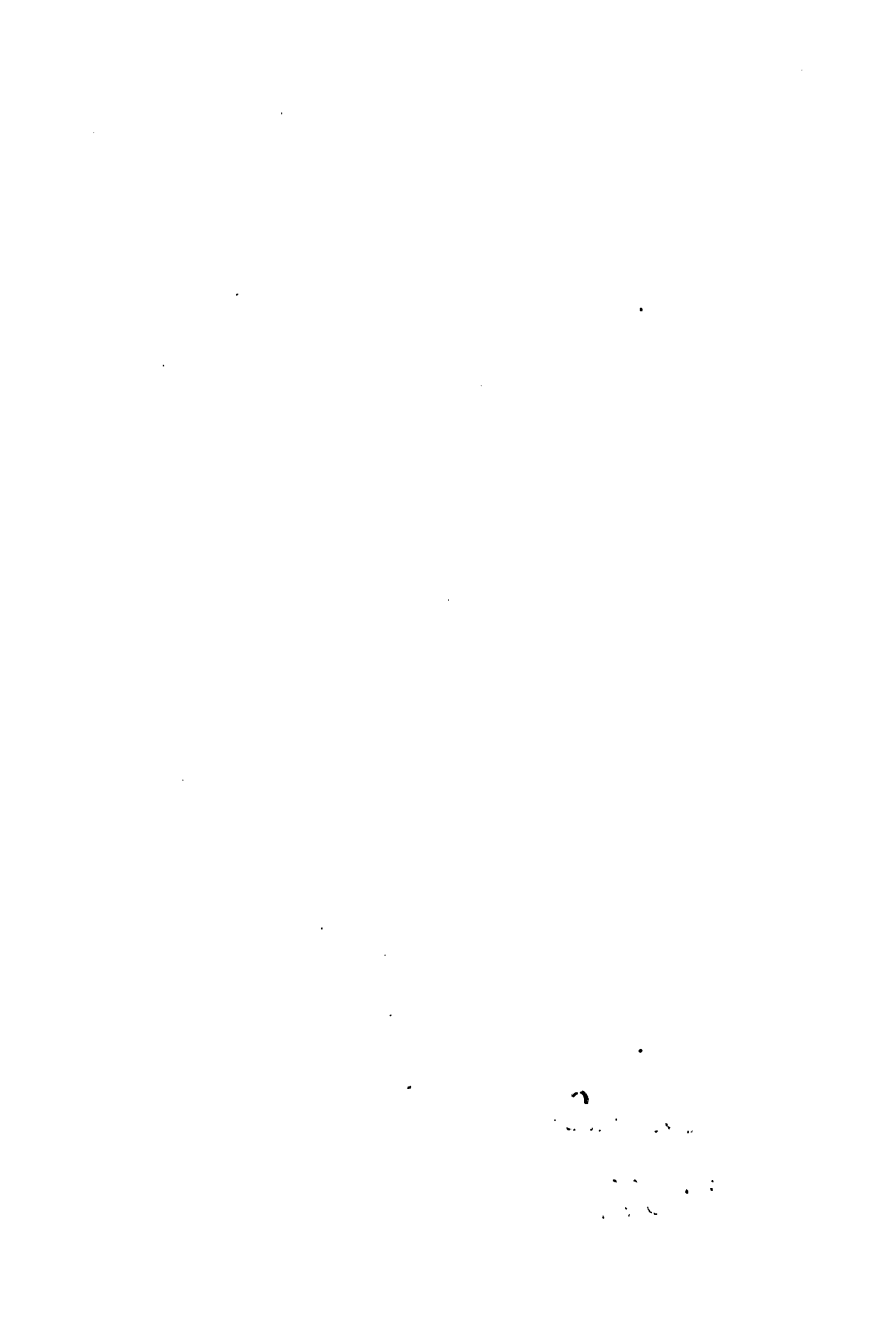


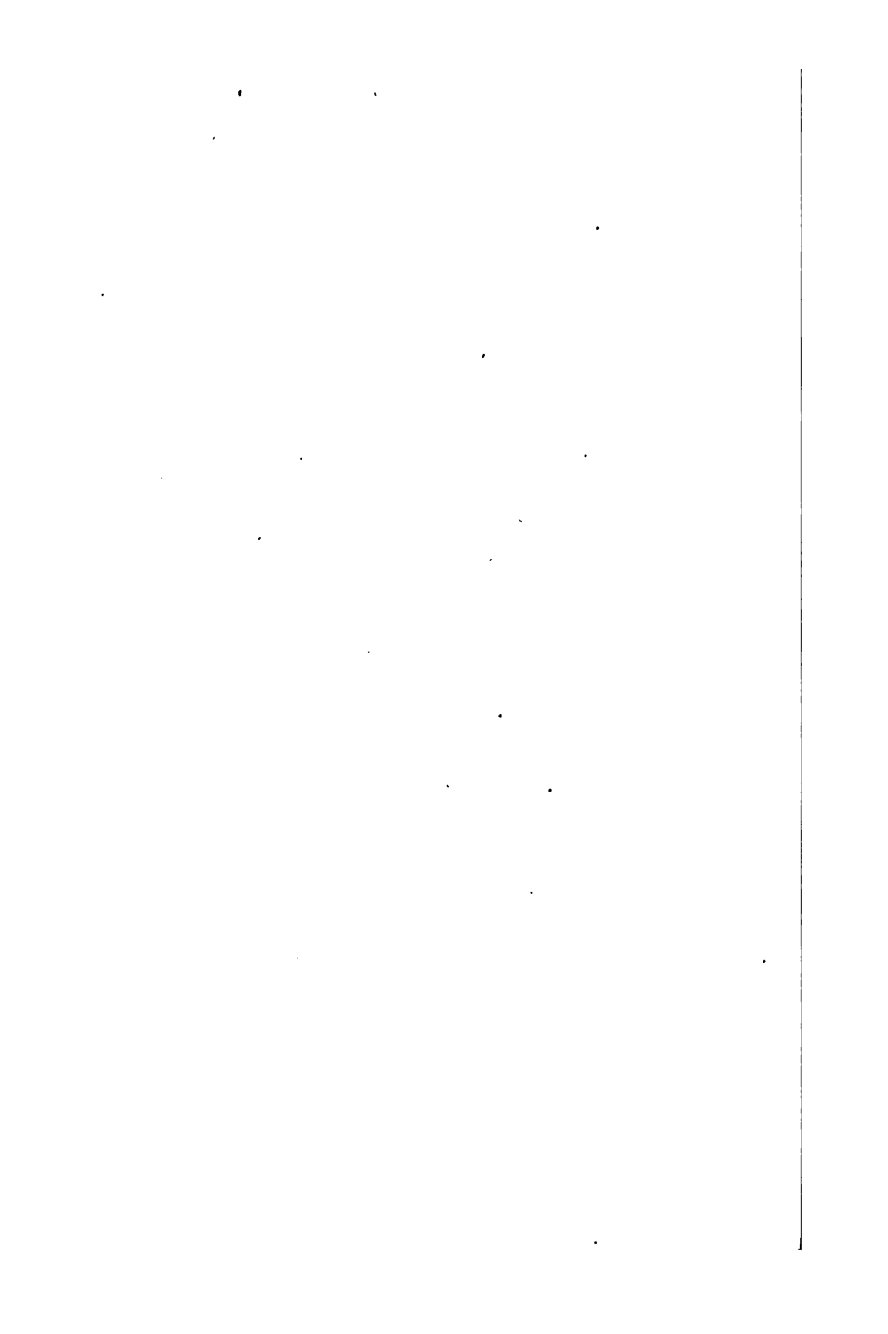
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THE HALL OF CHAVENLAY.

THE

HALL OF CHAVENLAY;

A WINTER'S TALE OF 1649.

BY HENRY CURLING,

AUTHOR OF

"THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE," "JOHN OF ENGLAND,"

"SHAKSPEARE, A ROMANCE," &c.

"The bay-trees in our country are all wither'd,
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven;
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth,
And lean-look'd prophets whisper fearful change;
Rich men look sad, and ruffians dance and leap."

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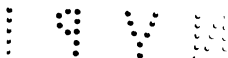
THE HALL OF CHAVENLAY.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT a cozy and genial time is Christmas! How amicable, social and hilarious we all become as that period of festivity and good fellowship approaches!—Nay! a peculiar feeling of brotherly love, peace and good will, would seem then more to prevail amongst men, than at any other time “o’ the year,” and the “human mortal,” however stern and unsociable, throws off a portion of his reserve and for once amidst the revels “puts an antic disposition on” to suit the joviality of the occasion.—Yes! if only for once in the year, a

kindly disposition would seem to creep over the coldest heart, and a Christian spirit everywhere to pervade; and oh! how cheerful seems it, when we gather together around the hearth in some old mansion, whilst dark December beats upon the casement; and howling winds without render the blazing log within doubly pleasant. Even the Miser, that stingy hunk, whose mouldy crust, and thin potation is marred by suspicious fears, even he grows mellow and companionable, when old Father Christmas appears upon the scene. He looks abroad and rubs his chin with a sort of enjoyment as the frost nips his fingers, and he smacks his thin lips at the sight of the good cheer he grudges almost to partake of. Nay! as the ruddy glow of the bright log thaws his icicle-heart, and radiant faces greet him on all sides, even he can join chorus in the merry glee, which makes the roof-tree vibrate.

Christmas is indeed a time when home and its influences are doubly pleasant. The veriest Scapegrace that ever wandered across "the ocean of adventurous deeds," looks over the watery waste, and thinks of the home circle and its old familiar scene, and as the tear is



swept from his cheek, even his restless spirit at such moment sighs for its comforts and its joys !

On Christmas Day, in the year 1649, the wind blew keen and furious over the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire. — Loudly it roared and bellowed amidst the stunted oaks, at that time lining the road on either hand between the Leckhampton Hills and the ancient town of Cirencester ; and onwards it rushed, whistling shrill and clear over the snow-clad waste between Cirencester and the town of Stroud, and as it turned impetuously in fitful gusts up lane and avenue, it bent almost to earth the tall trees surrounding the old Hall of Chavenlay, and as it whistled and screamed around the walls, seemed inclined to lift it up bodily and whirl it into the storm. Those who have been awakened on a winter's morning in the country in an old manor house, with its long galleries, its oaken chambers, its creaking doors and rattling windows, best know with what eccentric bursts, and angry voice, the wind beats and bellows without, moans and sighs within, and shrieks and whistles through creak and crevice. How one moment it comes roaring up the great avenue, as if some torrent had suddenly broken bounds, and then

dashes against wall and window, tower and buttress, till the whole edifice appears to shake and totter from base to summit. Then again how after a suspicious lull which just allows the drowsy listener to doze off, it bursts with a noise like heavy ordnance, and seems to smite the house with hard blows, as if by the suddenness of an unexpected effort, to catch the building unprepared, and at length after a succession of efforts, it seems to go shrieking off into space, baffled, angry and disappointed that the strong mansion will not yield to its power.

The Hall of Chavenlay, the ancient dwelling of the still more ancient family of that name, was situate on the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire ; built in the reign of bluff King Harry, its outward favour exhibited all those characteristic peculiarities comprehending what we now term the Tudor Style, peculiarities which the cunning architects of that period seemed so much to delight in. Consequently its various buildings displayed a mass of irregularity replete with stone carved balconies, beautifully wrought windows, large porches, and low arched posterns. Then there were huge stacks of twisted

chimnies sprouting out in the most fantastic fashion from the roof, and incomprehensible faces with reptile bodies, sprawling open-mouthed at every corner. In common with most dwellings of the period too, it was as much adapted for defence as comfort; consequently it was battlemented in many parts, and its various entrances carefully provided with the means of bringing down an intruder, and each door thick and strong enough for a Norman Castle.

CHAPTER II.

THE year 1649 was celebrated in the annals of England. The troubles of the times were felt in every town and hamlet, and a sense of fear and dread of some undefined calamity about to happen, penetrated to the hearths of almost every family in the kingdom. The Civil butchery which for six years had raged throughout the land, and the diabolical nature of those who had gotten the upper hand, not only brought sorrow and fear to almost every good man's door, but served to sow hatred, discord and distrust, between father and son, husband and wife, brother and sister, and as the Winter's wind of that year swept over the surface of the Island, the miseries of the times (as we before said) were felt in every corner where that wind penetrated.

Dark and ominous lowered the clouds, as morning broke on Christmas Day of that year, over the domain of Chavenlay; the very heavens seemed angry at the

wickedness of a people who turned the blessings bestowed upon them into bane !

“ Bless me ! how the wind do whistle and howl over the Cotswolds,” said old Simon Thrift, the house steward, as he bustled about in the great Hall, and superintended the preparations for the morning meal, “ More wood for the hearth, you scald knaves,” he cried, “ Come spread ! spread ! The house is full of guests, and they will be down anon — Hark ! I hear Sir Ralph’s door opening — Ah my conscience ! there’s another smash, as I am a sinner,” he continued as a heavy fall was heard without. “ Run, knaves, run, and see whats ado ! something has surely come down in the south wing, where Cromwell’s soldiers lay the week before Naseby.”

“ What’s that fallen now ? ” cried Sir Ralph, looking down into the hall.

“ Only the stack of chimnies over the Laundry,” said a servant who had been sent to see.— “ Umph ! ” said the Knight, “ I think the house will fall bodily next, an’ this hurricane hold. Look to the gate there, some one is knocking louder than the tempest.—Handle

your matchlocks, men, and peer out ere you open.— But stay I'll come myself, and Sir Ralph Chavenlay threw on his doublet and sword-belt, and descended into the Hall. "Now, Sir," he said, "who d'y'e make out there?"

"A Horseman white as a statue in stone," said the steward, "he seems to have ridden far, for his beast is quite done up, and steams like a kiln."

"News from London," said the Knight, "the time is ripe for some great event, admit him instantly, and take care of his horse one of ye." The great iron studded door, upon this order was thrown back, and a tall gaunt looking man entered, whose whole equipage shewed that he had journeyed long and far, since he had taken to the saddle. The snow fell from his cloak in flakes, his high boots were encrusted with soil, and his very beard seemed frozen over his jaws.

Striding into the Hall, without doffing his high crowned hat, he advanced up to the blazing hearth, and held his hands over the fire some moments, ere he noticed any one. He then turned and taking a letter from the pocket of his doublet, delivered it to Sir Ralph.

"From whom?" enquired the Knight.

"Read and learn," said the messenger abruptly and rudely, and again addressing himself to the warm fire, he undid the belt of his cloak, and threw it upon a chair.

"This comes from Cromwell," said Sir Ralph, as he gazed upon the superscription of the letter.

"Even so," said the stranger, "and if life hold, and his mind hold too, he will be here to-night himself."

"Then is there some great event at hand," returned the Knight, "How thrives the good cause?"

"Well as can be wished," replied the messenger. "But all are wanted, there is work to do, harkee!" and he advanced and whispered a few words in Sir Ralph's ear.

Sir Ralph started, and turned pale, "Must it come to that?" he said, "Heaven forbid that you should be serious."

"Read and learn," said the messenger. "What must be will be, all hands are wanted, I say."

"Gracious powers! I thought this might have been spared us;" said the Knight, after having perused the letter.

"Hardly," said the messenger, "if we ourselves look to be spared," and advancing to the board now spread for the morning meal, he clutched a huge flagon, and drank, whilst Sir Ralph again perused the letter, and his cheek grew paler as he did so.

"And you," he said, "know I you?"

"You have seen me at Edge-Hill, at Naseby and at Long Marston Moor, Huett is my name."

"I do indeed remember your face," said Sir Ralph, as he again gazed upon the letter, and then became lost in deep contemplation; after which, he seemed to start, as some of the household descended into the hall, and thrust the letter into his pocket, as if he feared its contents might even be guessed at.

Meantime the gaunt stranger unceremoniously sat down to the table, and helped himself unbidden to whatever lay nearest to his hand, eating and drinking with the voracity of a wolf.

"I crave pardon," said the Knight, observing him, "I ought to have recollected that you must be hungry, having ridden long?" "All night," said the messenger, speaking with his mouth full.

"And whence," said Sir Ralph, abstractedly.

"From London," returned the messenger, drinking as he spoke, and coughing in his glass.

"Sound the great bell for breakfast," said Sir Ralph to the Steward, and in a few minutes the family party, and the guests were assembled in the great Hall.

First came the Lady of the mansion, stately as her portrait upon the walls, and still bearing traces of the remarkable beauty it portrayed, after her tripped her daughter, a Hebe of eighteen, lovely as the goddess of Spring, and lively as a young fawn. Then followed other ladies and gentlemen, residents in the neighbourhood, who were come to spend the Christmas-tide at Chavenlay, with all the circumstance of feasting and revelry incident to the occasion.

"For people now their recent feuds forget,
Devises Victory, — Essex lines beset.
Sir Bevill's death, or ruined Waller's flight,
Or Rowton Heath, or Naseby's fatal fight;
And lordly Noble — Puritan severe
The cold Republican — or Cavalier
Meeting once more around the banquet board
Hailed there the birth-day of our Common Lord."

CHAPTER III.

How delightful to breakfast in an old house in the country, and that too at Christmas time, with biting winds without, and warmth, luxury and comfort within.

How pleasant under such circumstances, to dwell upon the alarms of the rough night, and laugh over the fears and fancies which daylight has dispelled.

In the Hall of Chavenlay, the proud banners of ancestral Chivalry hung aloft, amidst arms and armour which had seen the fields of Naseby and Edgehill, besides various battles recently fought in the neighbourhood of the Cotswold range.

"I dream'd a dream full of horrors," said Harcourt Pointdevice, a young Cavalier full of spirit, and shrewdly suspected by Charlotte, of entertaining strong hopes that she favoured his suit to her sweet self; — "I dreamt that a figure walked into my room, and up to

my bed-side, and when in alarm, I struck at it — Lo ! its head rolled off — hit me on the nose, and awoke me.”

“ O’ Lud ! ” said Charlotte, “ how deliciously horrid ! ”

“ How said ye,” interrupted the Knight, a figure without a head ! Strange coincidence ! Strange coincidence ! and he pulled out the letter he had received, and became lost in thought.

“ Dear me that’s very singular,” said old Sir Felix Falcon, another of Charlotte’s admirers, “ I dreamt a somewhat similar dream ; I thought that a head without a body, was all night long, flitting about inside the curtains of my bed, and bobbing at me like a ripe cherry.”

All laughed but Sir Ralph, and the gaunt messenger, they exchanged glances, and the Knight looked uneasy, as others of the company continued to compare their several dreams. At length he interrupted their mirth, “ Hold,” he said, “ I like not that grave matters should be made subject of ridicule, — dreams and omens, are not lightly to be flouted at,” and so saying the

Knight arose, paced up and down the Hall, and then suddenly quitting it, ascended the great stairs, and shut himself up in his own apartment.

"Sir Ralph does not seem quite the thing this morning," said Sir Felix to Lady Chavenlay.

"He has been troubled with a vision himself," returned the Lady.

"Ah indeed! bless me!" lisped the old beau, "well to be sure! what saith the poet? 'We are such stuff as dreams are made of.' Eh!"

Meantime whilst the party had been engaged with the good cheer before them, the gaunt stranger remained almost unnoticed. Fully occupied in satisfying the cravings of an appetite rendered doubly keen by his night ride over the Cotswolds, his presence was unremarked amongst so large an assemblage, and the consequent bustle of serving-men running hither and thither, and the various dependents, who (licensed by the Christmas time) came to bid all happiness to the family. Dressed in quaint costume many of them had their various offerings to make to the Master and Mistress of the Hall, and some even ventured upon little addresses

in jingling rhyme, whilst others carolled the Christmas Hymn.

The gaunt stranger was not however, likely to remain long unnoticed. His manners at all times rude and overbearing, became more so, when in company with those of elevated rank, consequently, no presence could long restrain his unlicensed brutality. Like the sour selfish faction which had so lately obtained power, he felt the most ardent desire to appropriate whatever he saw was worth the pains. Wealth, beauty, honours even if attainable, he felt inclined to grasp, with the strong hand. After partially satisfying his hunger, his eye dwelt upon all and each of the assembled party; now it glanced with a contemptuous expression, upon some young Cavalier who decked in brave apparel, was complimenting the nymph beside him; then it marked the stately form of the Lady of the house, from whence it wandered to the ancestral portraits upon the walls; then it dwelt upon the massive articles of plate, and other appliances of wealth and station, every where to be seen in that old Hall; and lastly it rested with admiration upon the surpassing beauty of the fair

Charlotte, and when once his gaze fastened itself upon that lady's face it became stationary, not even the viands upon the board being able to divert it.

Bright, joyous and innocent was the laughing voice of the maiden, as she replied to the set speeches and ceremonious compliments of her admirer, Sir Felix. Hers was one of those dispositions which could render an entire circle happy, by the influence of her brilliant wit, and charming manners. But, as she became aware of the settled stare of the gaunt Stranger, she felt the influence of his evil eye.

"Can you inform me," said she to Sir Felix, "who that savage looking man is, at the other end of the board?"

"Eh! bless me! I did not observe him before; what a singularly evil-looking person, one of Old Noll's Body-guard, as I'm a gentleman. I pray you good Simon," he enquired of the steward, "who is yonder guest, so heavily armed, when and whence came he?"

"A messenger from London, sent I rather think by General Cromwell, from what I gather'd," replied the old domestic.

“Bearer of news,” enquired the Cavalier eagerly.

“Even so,” said the domestic.

“Eh! Ah! bless me! something of import is at hand. I fear, alas! in common with all honest hearts, that some dire calamity awaits us.”

“Recollect, Sir Felix, the side my father takes,” said Charlotte rather gravely.

“Alas Lady! I do so, and grieve therefore, as you yourself must! Ah! that Grace of Kings! I fear for him!” —

Charlotte sighed, “Not for his life I trust,” she said anxiously, “they will scarce take that.”

“That is all he hath left,” said Sir Felix, “and that will they have.”

“Would that my father was not mixed up with that party so much,” said Charlotte.

“Amen! to that wish,” said Sir Felix, “the only satisfaction is, that it is the winning side; nay! had he not been on that side, we should scarce be sitting here, in this Hall, eating our Christmas breakfast;—they have taken almost all we gentlemen had to call our own! ‘Except our lives! except our lives! except our

lives !' as the most excellent Hamlet words it. But see lady," he said, rising, " here come the Moriscoes — 'The Nine-men morris ;' they are about to favour us with their dance within the Hall, by the same token this weather renders it impossible to revel without."

And now the tables being drawn, whilst holly and mistletoe on all sides greeted the eye ; the dancers with quaint gestures, every now and then striking their short sticks, and the bells upon their legs jingling at each step, began to dance their antique dance, the whole household standing around to look on. Then as the great organ pealed from the gallery above, swelling through passage and corridor, the voices of all joined in chorus, and again the Christmas Carol was sung ; after which the company, standing or sitting in groups in the Hall, or dispersing through the various apartments, amused themselves as they best might.

CHAPTER IV.

THE presence of one ill conditioned guest 'tis said will oftentimes mar the festivity of a party, and throw a gloom over all enjoyment, and so it was in the present instance. We have already said that the entire establishment was opposed to the opinions of the owner of the Hall ; indeed those who were not downright Royalists at heart, were at least what we should call at the present time Conservatives. Consequently when it came to be known that the gaunt stranger was a creature of Cromwell's, the addition of his ill manners rendered his very presence an offence, and cast a shadow upon the whole establishment : his coming seemed portentous, and in place of the usual joviality of a Christmas party, in which by common consent all worldly disagreements were abolished for mirth and revelling, the company gradually separated into small coteries, and in the deep embayments of the

windows, as they gazed upon the storm, conversed in low tones, of the troubles of the times, the imminent danger in which the King was placed, and their own anticipations of evil.

“Good heart ! how the snow comes down,” said Sir Felix, as he looked out of the window of a small apartment adjoining the Hall, and strained his eyes to penetrate through the driving storm. “We shall scarce get our walk before dinner upon the green to see the revels there.”

“’Tis a miserable morning sir,” said Pierce Dole, “exceedingly depressing, fearfully ominous. Alas ! these be awful times ; I declare to you I’ve had no rest all night for noise and uproarious winds, and for thinking of the situation of our Royal Master.”

“Pshaw man, think not about it to-day,” said his friend, “remember this is Christmas-time, and for one day, let us forget all worldly troubles ; look man at holly branch and misletoe bough ; and then bethink thee of comely maidens, and dance, revel and feasting. Eh, I shall eat, I shall drink, I shall caper, I shall — ah ! and here comes the fairest lass that ever tripp’d it beneath a

garland, Save you, fair excellence, and many returns of this day, with less snow and wind to usher it in."

"But — eh — ah — bless me," he continued, as Charlotte hurried by and vanished through a small door at the other end of the apartment, "surely something has scared the maiden. Ah! I perceive, this ugly giant has offended her; I will accost him."

Accordingly, as the Cromwellian (who had evidently followed the young lady, entered the room and was about to pass) the Cavalier abruptly placed himself before him. "Admiration, sir," he said, "should never be obtrusive; a daughter of this house is no fit object for your rudeness."

"Nor for your love-suit I opine," returned the Cromwellian. "Go to, it better suits my years than thine to follow beauty. Enough, I would pass."

"Not to follow that lady," said the Cavalier; "I profess myself her servant and defender."

"Thou her defender," said the gaunt soldier; "thou! pshaw, stand aside, I would pass I tell thee."

"I should be loth to broach a quarrel under this roof," said the Cavalier, "and that too on this holy day, but

again I repeat it, he who persecutes that lady, must answer it."

"In the beaten way of soldiership," answered the Cromwellian, "I have slain men as Long Marston-Moor, Naseby and Edge Hill can testify; but I fight no invited duel — certes I wear deadly weapons too if assailed."

"May I crave the favour of your name," said the Cavalier.

"Pshaw, old man, thou art a fool," returned the Cromwellian.

"Bless me," said Sir Felix, "a fool said ye?"

"Yes, a fool in all things, in ideas, in dress, in pursuits, feelings, profession, in all things."

"Good," said the Cavalier, "exceeding good, most excellent."

"Pshaw," said the Cromwellian, "stand aside, I would pass through that door."

"Not to follow *that* lady," persisted the old Cavalier.

The Cromwellian deigned no further parley, but suddenly seizing the old beau by one arm, with great force he swung him from his path, and left the apartment.

Sir Felix's first impulse, after the surprize of this discomfiture, was to draw forth his bright weapon, his next caused him to look around in order to see who had witnessed the insult.

Luckily in the small anti-room in which the altercation had taken place, no one but his friend Dole had been present.

"A coarse ruffian, master Dole," he said, "but it shall be atoned; you must bear a cartel. I will immediately seek our host and learn the name of the scavenger."

"Is't not strange," said Dole, "that a man of Sir Ralph's station can endure these unscrupulous knaves. By my faith I have seen during these dreadful wars, this Hall polluted by scores of such ruffians, to the no small discomfort of the female portion of the household."

"And is it not as strange," said Sir Felix Falcon, "that a Gentleman can be of any side but one. Methinks if a hedge-stake were put up in yonder park, with the King's hat and plume on't, I must be of the party where that stake was. But alas, these be dire times."

"Sir, I tell you," said Dole, "that times even more miserably unfortunate are at hand. The King—The

King — Sir Felix, my word on't his life is spann'd — did ye not gather that this evil looking ruffian, was the bearer of a dispatch from Cromwell."

"Aye, did I, and that Cromwell himself is expected to-day."

"Egad — an that be the case, an Cromwell come hither," said Dole, "it is not this snow, nor this wind either, that will keep me here, when he comes. Hark in thine ear, Sir Felix, we're bought and sold, that's certain, and I would rather not be seen by that dreadful man. And shrugging their shoulders, the pair left the room.

CHAPTER V.

MEANTIME the gaunt messenger seemed to rejoice in the disgust his presence created amongst the assemblage at Chavenlay? His coming seemed like that of some bird which portends evil. The domestics even looked at him with dread, as, with the intrusive impertinence of his nature, he peered about and looked into Hall, Kitchen, Stable and Pantry. The old Steward, with ill concealed ire, as he watched him stalking along passage and corridor, affirmed that he came to spy, value and sequestrate the whole property, and huddled the family plate away as he approached.

"He's like the evil one stalking through the house," said old Margery the housekeeper.

"What a black muzzle he has," said Stephen. "Ill bodes the house where such fellows are guests," said Roger. "He looks like a thief," said greasy Joan the

scullion. "Nay," said Walter the head Falconer, "an I catch him near my hawks hang me but I'll try his doublet with my cross-bow-bolt. I ne'er saw a deer-stealer with a worsen leer."

"A deer-stealer quotha," said Marion, a deer-stealer — Marry I've seen many a handsome deer-stealer — yonder fellows looks like a murderer."

And if the advent of this ill-looking stranger caused so great a sensation amongst all assembled at the Hall, upon the head of the establishment his coming seemed to have created even greater discomfort, since, for many hours after the morning meal, Sir Ralph had absented himself from the party and shut himself up in his apartment; till, as the day wore on, he sent for the messenger and remained in close conference with him.

But perhaps the persons who felt themselves most annoyed by the Parliamentarian, were the ladies of the establishment. His style and bearing being so intrusively familiar, that, only in consideration of his being politically connected in some way with her husband, could the mistress of the Hall restrain herself from having him thrust from her doors.

To Charlotte his conduct had been especially offensive, since (after his altercation with Sir Felix Falcon,) he had sought out and followed her from room to room, and (on gaining opportunity of speech) after an abrupt compliment upon her personal appearance, he professed he was so greatly taken with her charms, that he declared himself her ardent admirer — and as abruptly offered her his hand.

At first Charlotte looked at him with a mixture of astonishment and affright. But the next moment she burst into a violent fit of laughter, and escaping, took refuge in her own apartment, whence after donning a cloak and hat, she soon afterwards descended a small flight of steps, and opening a postern-door, which admitted into the chapel, passed thence into the grounds of the mansion.

It was somewhat unfortunate for the domestic happiness of Sir Ralph Chavenlay, that (although he was in reality a man of no great or shining abilities) he had fancied himself called upon by the exigencies of the times to perform the part of a remodeller, a reformer and a patriot. The good Knight indeed, as the world goes,

might truly have been called in all his dealings an honest man. He was a good husband, a good father, a good neighbour and a staunch friend. Nay, in easy times, he would doubtless have lived happily and died respected ; but unfortunately for himself, as we before said, he fancied he was called upon to mix in politics and help to reform abuses. He had a bias that things wanted mending, and that he was specially called upon, not only to express an opinion, but to act up to his call ; consequently after having lived to the age of fifty, a jovial, hearty Country Gentleman, he suddenly became thoughtful, gloomy and severe, and holding himself occasionally aloof, even from his own family, he would shut himself up and brood over fancied evils which never existed, except in his own heated imagination ; till on the breaking out of the troubles of Charles's reign, in an evil hour for his own future peace of mind and domestic comfort, he had been induced to appear in arms at the head of a regiment of horse, in behalf of the Parliament. Indeed the great Rebellion had gained strength, at its outset, from the adherence of many such men. Men of wealth and distinction, who neither contemplated the miserable results which were to ensue,

nor that their armed opposition to the measures of the Crown was to involve them ultimately in the Murder of their King. And who still less foresaw that the feelings which induced them to incur the hazard of Civil War was by its very success, to bind the Nation in chains of iron, far more galling and heavy, than could possibly have been contemplated by the Monarch in whose blood they imbrued their hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE storm, which had not diminished since the morning, was still raging as Charlotte left the Chapel, and she was obliged to bow down her head to avoid the stinging snow-shower, which drove in her face. "I somewhat doubt," she said to herself, laughing as she stopped for a moment to recover breath after a few yards had been gained, "whether even my rude suitor would be induced to follow me out in such weather as this, and for my silken-coated admirers, not one of them I opine would face this pitiless storm, even if I had asked for an escort. Nay," she continued, as she again tried to advance, and again was obliged to stop — "it seems doubtful whether I shall myself reach the spot I wish to find."

It did indeed seem somewhat doubtful whether the fair Charlotte would be able to cope with the furious wind, which blew every now and then with such force,

that scarcely any one could stand against its fury. She was not, however, easily to be daunted, and accordingly sped onwards in spite of all impediment, and in a few minutes passed over the space which lay between the Hall and a thick belt of shrubbery, and, having reached the shelter of the trees, again paused and looked about her. If the caution used by the fair maiden arose from any fear of being observed from the house, it was needless, as the large flakes of driven snow now came down in such quantities, that it was impossible for the eye to penetrate half a dozen yards. Charlotte saw this as she stood somewhat sheltered by the bare boughs of the tall trees. The dark buttress'd wall of the pleasaunce of the Hall, was situated at the extremity of the avenue she had gained, a small postern admitting to the garden where the walk turned. This she quickly passed and closing and locking the door behind her, stood alone there. Like most gardens of the period, the grounds of Chavenlay were laid out after a style and fashion now completely exploded ; the walks being, in some parts, a perfect maize of dark yew trees, whilst in others, terrace walks, ornamented with stone carved urns, and statues,

varied the aspect. The thick walls too (surrounded and overshadowed by the branches of the gigantic trees of the park) were at intervals surmounted by quaint looking figures, and over the several arched gateways a smiling Cupid held aloof in his arms, a helmet surmounted by the ancient crest of the family.

In Summer, "the sweet summer time" when the trees were laden with fruit, such a pleasure must have presented a delightful picture; but at the present moment all was bound down in one white sheet of snow, which, drifting against hedge and wall, formed, in some parts, steep banks almost impassable, — nay even the antique sundial which stood in the midst, was now a shapeless white mound overwhelmed in the driving snow.

Yet still, altho' at times, Charlotte was obliged to make a long detour in order to cross the garden, still she persevered, nay that which would have utterly foundered a fair lady of the present time was only looked upon as accident of course by her — a huntress — a hawker — one to whom the cry of the pack was melody; what cared she for howling winds and deep snow-drifts; she had evidently some reason for her perseverance, for, as she at length became almost

bewildered in the difficulties of the path, she stopped and anxiously listened to the clock of the distant mansion as it struck the hour, and then, with renewed energy, she once more breasted the storm.

To some persons the fairest scene in nature is "all barren." The fair Charlotte was however of so opposite a disposition to this, that in the most desolate prospect she would have found something to admire, and accordingly even now she felt there was a charm in that winter garden which deserved attention. Those roaring winds "the couriers of the air." How they seemed to rush from end to end of the world. How awfully they moaned too in the distant woods — Whence came they? and where was to be their limit? They spoke of "ages long ago betid," and seemed to bear onward in their course the spirits of the storm.

Whilst these imaginings passed through the mind of Charlotte, she at length, managed to gain a part of the garden almost hidden in a labyrinth of dark evergreen shrubs and yew tree hedges, beyond which, in an angle of, and indeed forming part of the wall itself, stood a small stone-built summer-house.

As Charlotte entered the dark walk, she became conscious that a figure enveloped in a horseman's cloak, was standing upon the steps at the entrance of the summer house, as she advanced it hastily descended the steps,

"A moment more — and they shall meet—

"'Tis past — her lover's at her feet."

CHAPTER VII.

IN times of danger, and during those fierce wars which desolated the kingdom and severed the dearest ties, the meeting of two lovers was a much more problematical event than it is in our own days.

For besides the possible opposition of friends, there were the troubles of the times to be taken into account between the parties. Their loves, their hopes, their fears, were closely mixed up with the politics of the war, and as battle and skirmish followed each other, little news of those engaged cheered the dull melancholy hours of friends left in dreadful expectation at home.

Exile, imprisonment and death were but too frequently the daily lot of men of condition in the kingdom. Brief was the meeting, and oftentimes eternal the separation between wife and husband, sister and brother, and desolate were the hearths of many a noble house.

Gaston de Beverston alone remained of a family consisting of a father and three sons, who had followed Charles to the field at the commencement of his troubles. The youngest of the family, he had gone forth a mere child, and now that the King was a prisoner, he found himself alone in the world, and with a price set upon his head by the conquerors. Bitter was his hatred against all connected with the party through whom he had so grievously suffered, scarce turned of twenty he had already seen and endured as much as many aged men, and when the Royal cause was lost, had never left the side of the fallen monarch, till a prison enclosed him from his view.

As he stood and gazed upon Charlotte, after their first greeting was over, although at first sight there might seem little to remark about the youth, a second look would be likely to fix the gazer's attention. Educated as he had been in the rough grindstone of the Civil Wars, there was nothing rude or swaggering in his manners. On the contrary, there was a degree of elegance in his bearing which scarcely any unbred in Courts, at the period, owned. Although low in stature, and slightly

made, there was something in his eye which surely indicated that he would be an awkward person to oppose if once aroused. Indeed the whole bearing of the man proclaimed this. Eye, foot, and hand were made for the rapier, and agile as a cat, what was wanting in strength and bulk, was more than supplied by skill and activity.

Doffing his wide brimmed hat and drooping plumes, as he entered the summer house with Charlotte, he gazed upon her with feelings of the greatest delight, and seemed to mark the improvement made in her beauty since he had last beheld her. "And Oh! Charlotte," he said, as he held her hands in his own, "what a moment is this to me. To me whose life of anxiety and action scarce permits that I should leave the service of those to whom I have dedicated that life and service, for one hour in the four and twenty."

"You have been abroad Gaston," said Charlotte, "since we last met."

"I have," he replied, "more than once since the King has been a prisoner. The desolate Queen (albeit she little suspects the peril her husband now stands in) she fondly hopes his life will be spared, cannot live
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unless she hears frequently from him. To me is entrusted the difficult task of conveying letters to her."

"A service of trust and danger," said Charlotte, "It proves the worth, truth, and loyalty of him so engaged."

"The more so Charlotte," he replied, "since it separates me from you,—Alas, brief as must be our meeting, it may be the last," and again the young Cavalier gazed fondly upon the maiden, whilst a melancholy expression overshadowed his countenance.

"Nay," said Charlotte, "this war is I trust now over, let us hope for better times, my father may now be induced to consent to our union."

"No, Charlotte," said the youth, "I cannot hope it. A terrible time approaches. At least to all who would not willingly be ground under plough-shares, and harrows of iron. I, who so well know the nature of the men in power, know that they are bent on the murder of their King. And Oh! Charlotte," he continued as he paced the room, "you may judge how great is the love I bear to thee, when I say that albeit I know how much thy Father is my enemy, and that he is about to aid in this murder too,—Yet still I am again here for one short glance upon thy beauty."

"Nay Gaston," said Charlotte reproachfully, "your party-feelings surely prevail in this. Believe me my Father will never be persuaded to advocate this deed of blood and horror. 'Tis impossible."

"Aye, so you think," he returned, "but mark me Charlotte there will come a messenger this day from Cromwell, and those about to institute a tribunal to sentence the King. They want the aid of all whom they can drag into their bloody councils. Your Father, a man of import in this County, will be summoned."

"But he will not go," said Charlotte.

"Credit me Charlotte," returned her lover, with marked emphasis, "such men as Cromwell take no denial."

"And the messenger?" enquired Charlotte, "Know you his outward favour?"

"Too well, a tall dark visaged, evil-looking man."

"Alas," said Charlotte with a shudder, "such a man has arrived."

"Already, said ye," he enquired, "already."

"Yes, — who and what is he?"

"One of the most infamous caitiffs, ever employed in a

bad cause," he resumed, — "yet like the rest of his faction, a saint and a professed reformer of abuses."

"But," said Charlotte, "this man you say is sent by Cromwell; surely you think not so badly of Cromwell. His is at least a patriotic spirit."

"A what," said her lover with a derisive laugh, "O! Charlotte, mark me; thy father, (albeit he is a mistaken, is a well meaning man.) He is too good-hearted to suspect the self-seeking hypocrites with whom he is associated. His judgement will be *warped* — *overborne*. And yet 'tis strange that one so honest can still adhere to the cause after what he has beheld. Our country desolate; every sacred feeling outraged; our homes blackened ruins; our cathedrals and churches made the stables for horses. — Their walls defiled and desecrated — their very altars polluted. — Could'st thou have looked upon this England, Charlotte, as I have done, whilst fighting over its acres, from county to county, thou would'st have beheld almost every relic of its ancient grandeur demolished and destroyed. Yes, go where thou wilt, these levellers have left in the breached and falling walls, of what but yesterday were noble for-

treasures and lordly halls, — evidences of their destroying spirit. Nay, there is but one thing I can give the demons credit for — 'tis that they have kept promise with us. — They swore to blot out from the land every trace of what was noble and elevated, — to level all to their own low standard, and o' my word they have almost effected it. Yes," he continued, "they have razed out our very dwellings from the land, and ere long they will parcel out the land itself amongst themselves. They have kept neither faith in war nor peace. They have affrighted earth with their wickedness, whilst offending heaven with their hypocrisy, — and yet these men call themselves (aye, and *are called*) *Religious*. But," he continued, stopping short and taking Charlotte's hand, "I came not to speak to thee of these things, for when in thy presence, I ought to forget all, everything, but thine own sweet self."

"Alas," said Charlotte, "it grieves me to see you thus, for never before have you appeared so disheartened."

"Because, Charlotte," he returned, "I have never before been without hope. Believe me, a dark cloud

has settled over England, as surely as yonder cloud lowers upon this desolate garden. Nay, each hour I myself remain here, is fraught with danger, yet still will I not quit England for ever whilst Charles lives. Then indeed, if alive, I must seek safety abroad, and now, Charlotte, comes the question I am here to ask. — Wilt thou share my fortunes and accompany me. I know thou wilt answer that you hope by patience to gain the consent of Sir Ralph, but such an answer will not suffice now; once separated, without giving me hope, and we may never meet again; 'tis true I have little to offer thee, but what my sword will win in a foreign land. My Castle of Beverston is dismantled, my lands are alienated; whilst you——”

“Whilst I,” she said, “the heiress of this fair domain, you would add, must lose all if I wed with you.”

“True, so I understand your father has willed it,” he said.

“Even so.”

“And even so would you accept me?”

“As I would accept of offered grace.”

“Then will I be plain, Gaston. If it prove true, that

my father lends himself to the deed you have named, I will no longer consider myself bound to obey him in this matter."

"Enough," said Gaston, "I am satisfied, Charlotte, and now we must part, — you to your bright hearth and Christmas revels, I to count the miles 'twixt this place and the sea-coast."

"Then you are again about to cross the ocean, Gaston?" enquired Charlotte.

"Even so; I have been sent for by the Queen in all haste, Prince Charles intends to entrust me with a mission of the highest import, — a *carte blanche*, with his signature, to be filled up by the miscreants who seek his father's life, binding himself to forego all pretensions to succession, provided they will forego their design, and spare the King."

"Heaven grant you success in your mission," said Charlotte, "but alas! what fearful weather to ride in, surrounded too as you are by enemies who seek your life."

"And yet," said Gaston, as he looked from the window, "such storm is best suited to my fortunes; and so farewell, dearest Charlotte, if life hold, I will

be here again, at this hour, in twelve months from this time."

As the lady held forth her hand, the youth clasped her to his heart. The next moment he had leapt from the window into the park. He turned and waved his hand, after mounting his horse, and was then quickly lost to sight.

And thus the lovers parted amidst the driving storm in that cold summer-house. Their hopes apparently as frigid as the wintry prospect before them.

Charlotte remained for some minutes lost in thought, whilst she listened to the retreating sound of the horse's hoof tread. She then slowly took her way towards the Hall.

The clank of the bell which hung over the gate-house sounded as she neared the mansion. Entering by the small postern through which she had emerged, she quickly gained her own room, changed her apparel, and descended to the great hall.

And what a contrast did the interior present to the nakedness without. As Charlotte descended into the hall, where the tables were now spread, all seemed in one

bright glow of welcome : the huge logs upon the hearth, the sconces on the walls (already lighted) the rich colouring given by the flaming tapers to the pictures, arms and armour hanging around ; the gay dresses of the company, all seemed touched as by a painter's brush.

CHAPTER VIII.

MANY of our readers have but a faint idea of the vast profusion displayed at a Christmas banquet in the olden time. The feast, the revel, and all matters connected with observance of that sacred day, had perhaps kept an entire district in expectation for weeks before it took place.

It privileged the poorer dependants, at least for once in the year, to mingle with their superiors, and take part in the quaint games and dramatic revels of the period. Nay, it would have been considered a reproach to the hospitality of the whole household did the meanest traveller or way-faring beggar depart without having his wallet as well as his stomach filled with the good things provided.

The records of the times tell us that foreigners were astonished at the enormous quantity of provisions consumed at the feasts and revels of the English. Especially


did they marvel when they beheld the ordinary profusion of the Court Banquets. Indeed, it sounds like romance when we read of thirty thousand dishes being served up to table on one occasion, and at another of sixty fat oxen forming only one article of provision for the feast ; and yet are such things matter of history.

The viands provided for the tables of the gentry too, were no less plentiful, especially a few years before the date of our story, and at Christmas time it was matter of religious feeling to shew no lack.

“ They served up salmon, venison and wild boars,
By hundreds and by dozens, and by scores.
Hogsheads of honey, kilderkins of mustard,
Muttons and fatted beeves, and bacon swine,
Hérons and bitterns, peacocks, swan and bustard,
Teal, mallard, pigeons, widgeons, and in fine,
Plum-puddings, pancakes, apple-pies and custard,
And then withal they drank good Gascon wine,
With mead and ale and cider of our own,
For porter, punch and negus were not known.”

Although the republican fancies of Sir Ralph Chavenlay had marvellously soured his disposition, and changed him

from a good easy man into a sour, moody and dissatisfied politician, they had not altogether rendered him so great a reformer in his own household, as in many instances had been the case amongst his neighbours; many of whom from being open-hearted, hospitable country gentlemen, had become mean pitiful companions and bad subjects in every way. Indeed the sneaking, pinched and underhand doings of the Puritans were so completely at variance with the feelings of both the wife and daughter of Sir Ralph, that he would have found it difficult to introduce their selfish reforms into his own household. And thus the observances of the Christmas time were in full force. Accordingly the board seemed to groan under a profusion of good things, a band of music sounded from the gallery above, troubadours and minstrels (clad, as if from Holy Land) thrummed upon broken winded ghitterns, and sang ballads of old times. Errant Knights and salvage Esquires, swart Moors, and Pilgrims (got up for the nonce) mingled amongst the more orthodox characters of the Christmas revels; and all seemed hilarity and enjoyment as the evening wore on.



The Hostess who felt true enjoyment in rendering rich and poor happy, queened it gloriously. As for the fair Charlotte she laughed both with and at her antiquated admirer Sir Felix, and danced through hall, room and corridor in all the innocency of her heart; and if at times she threw herself, out of breath, upon a seat, and listening to the storm without, thought of her lover exposed to its fury, she comforted herself with the reflection that, as a soldier, he was more worthily employed, than if he had been treading a measure in that bright Hall, with herself for a partner.

Amidst this scene of life and light, all seemed happy, except the Host and the Gaunt Messenger. The former (in spite of an effort to throw off care) was evidently ill at ease. Every now and then he searched in his pocket for the letter he had received, and then muttering to himself — “ a strange cure — a strange cure — ” became lost in thought, and whenever the tall form of Huett crossed his path, he started and shrunk back. As for the latter personage, albeit he was satisfied at his own position (inasmuch as he found himself in the very midst of good cheer) his envious disposition grudged the enjoyment

of those around, and he stalked about making ill-natured remarks, whenever he could find any one sufficiently disengaged to listen to them.

"I thought Sir Ralph was a God fearing man, a goodly vessel," he said to the Steward as the old man was heading half a dozen serving men laden with bowls of liquor.

"Body o'me and so he is," returned the Steward stopping short, "who shall say nay to that."

"What," returned Huett, "and encourage all this sinful waste—this superabundance of food—enough to feed a whole village."

"And how know you it will not feed a whole village, Master Black Mug," replied the Steward, "credit me you are but a short sighted Saint. We feed a good many here, that your sour faction would treat to matchlock balls and no grace before 'em either," and the old Steward resumed his progress.

"Unholy mummeries," said the Cromwellian, as a smite upon the face, from the bladder, carried by a clown or fool, forced him to make way for Old Father Christmas with icy crown and long white beard.

"Ungodly revels," he exclaimed as the Hobby horse caper'd by, and the Dragon flapped his wings in his eyes, "Relics of Pagan Superstition," he muttered again as St. George charged the Dragon and poked the spear into his ribs in passing. "Accursed abominations," he continued as Sir Felix being somewhat flustered with flowing cups, kissed Maid Marian under the mistletoe bough.

"Lo," he said, "I will myself accost that comely Masquer and expound my mind to her."

It is somewhat questionable, however, in how much the favourite of Robin Hood relished his interference for she boxed his ears soundly. Nay so utterly disagreeable did he manage to render himself amongst a batch of village lasses who helped to make up a rustic dance in the Servants'-Hall, that half a dozen clodpolls laid hands upon him in order to thrust him into the horsepond, which intent they would assuredly have carried out, had not a violent knocking at the great door caused a diversion in his favour.

CHAPTER IX.

THE clamour without was at first supposed by the revellers to be a part of the mummery; but when the door was opened, three persons entered so completely covered with snow that at first it was difficult to make out what they were like. The foremost however (after uncere- moniously shaking himself) strode into the Hall, and, bluntly saluting Sir Ralph, grasped his hand, gave it a hearty shake, and then took his station directly oppo- site the fire.

"How fares it with Ralph Chavenlay," he said, "though I need hardly ask, for you seem in good case here, and right merry with all."

"You have had desperate weather for your ride, General," said the Knight.

"You may say that," returned the traveller; "but you expected me nevertheless."

"Your messenger led me to do so."

"And you are ready to return with me."

"To-night?" said Sir Ralph.

"To-night," iterated the new comer abruptly. "Aye to-night, do'st think such business as ours is to wait for day-light and fair weather."

"Truly I should say nay to that," observed the clown thrusting himself into the conference, "better foul weather and darkness for matters that are doubtful."

A back handed blow from the traveller sent the all-licensed fool several paces backwards.

The sturdy yeoman who had assumed this character for the nonce, seemed half inclined to resent the blow, but there was something in the inflamed visage of the stout heavily built person who had dealt it, that caused him to draw back.

"Keep your wit for the idiots who relish it," said the latter, whilst he threw a scrutinizing glance amongst the throng, and whose revels seemed to have suddenly come to a stand still. Some getting into little knots and speaking in whispers, and all intently regarding him as his figure stood out in bold relief before the fire.

"Who is he?" enquired the jester of the steward, "by'r Lady, my jaws ache again."

"No doubt, no doubt;" returned the steward, "that man hits hard when he does hit," and he whispered something in the jester's ear, and then hurried off.

The new comer meantime appeared to enjoy the genial warmth of the fire amazingly, for he stood some minutes before it, now warming his back, now turning and spreading out his hands, and then thrusting his boots into the flames, to warm his half frozen feet.

As he did so one of the persons who had accompanied him, in low tones enquired if the party without were to remain on guard.

"No," he said sharply, "let them to Tetbury, to the Hostel there, I return at dawn;" so saying the stranger again turned to the fire and busied himself by pressing down the blazing logs with his heavy boot-heel, whilst the clatter of an armed party was plainly to be distinguished filing out of the Courtyard.

Whilst this was passing a whispered rumour and a name went through the Hall, which effectually checked

all desire for mirth and jollity. It was a name of import, carrying with it a variety of impressions, curiosity, fear, dislike, and other feelings consequent upon the events then in progress, and as it reached the ears of Lady Chavenlay, who with her daughter was in another apartment, she hastily sought the Hall.

Cromwell, for he it was, was neither a very gallant or polite person. He had withal a mean opinion of womankind in general. But there was a degree of dignity and high breeding about Lady Chavenlay that forced him to be ceremonious. He even doffed his steel-lined beaver; advanced a pace and bowed in return to her very courtly recognition.

"I crave pardon, Madam," he said, "for the lateness of this visit—business of import must excuse it, the more so as I must take your husband to London."

"Is your business with my husband, General," said Lady Chavenlay, "of such a nature that a wife may be admitted to its councils?"

"Affairs of state, Madam," said Cromwell abruptly, "are no woman's gear," and turning away he took Sir

Ralph by the arm and moved from the hearth. "Harkee Sir Ralph," he said, "I have no time for idle talk, the heavy matter we have to treat of must be discoursed by ourselves — alone."

"Shall I order refreshments into the chamber prepared for you," said the Knight.

"Do so," he said, "and shew me to it," and the pair accordingly ascended the great stairs, and entered a room at the end of the corridor, a gloomy tapestried apartment which still goes by the Protector's name.

Lady Chavenlay looked at her daughter whose countenance reflected the feelings expressed in her own. "I fear the coming of this man portends little good to us," she said.

"Or the cause we advocate," returned Charlotte. "Heaven forbid that my father should accompany him to London."

"Amen," said her mother, "but I fear his mind is so much warped by the influence of these Republicans, that he will be induced to do so."

CHAVENLAY.

After the arrival of the Gene:
noticed flagged. That secret fe:
the forerunner of evil, pervaded
the hostess, like Lady Macbeth
feast marr'd, hastened to dismis
repose.

CHAPTER X.

THERE was nothing dignified or imposing in Cromwell's appearance. On the contrary, he was coarse both in manners and person. Indeed when he was not the brute he was generally the buffoon. His great success in all he undertook, resulted entirely from the unwearied steadiness with which he held on towards the point he meant to attain. How he managed so successfully to get others to play into his hands till his purposes were served, and then to " whistle them down the wind," and hunt up new instruments, is a marvel ; unless we remember that he carefully chose those instruments from amongst the half insane fanatic, the coarse ruffian, the unscrupulous villain, or the feeble in intellect.

As Sir Ralph ushered him into the apartment where their conference was to be held, the General turned sharply upon him.

" You understood my letter ? " said he

" I fear so," replied the Knight.

" Then you see the necessity of what I urge."

" I would avoid so strange a cure," said Sir Ralph.

" No doubt, so would I, shew me but how, and you'll take a mountain from my shoulders."

" I have cried unto Heaven," said Sir Ralph, " to point out a way, and Lo ! I cannot find one."

" Nor I, nor any of us, we too have sought in vain for an expedient, either we ourselves, or the man Charles, must perish."

" I cannot see how that is so entirely necessary," urged Sir Ralph.

" You joined our party at the beginning of this business at the head of a regiment of horse," said Cromwell sharply and significantly.

" I joined your cause in order to put down tyranny, not to take life."

" Fool," said Cromwell violently, " are you content to lose your own. Harkee, Ralph Chavenlay, whilst the man Charles lives, the cause lives, — Tyranny lives. Nay, more, we ourselves die."

“ Although I dislike the King and his uncompromising acts, his great virtues I honour and respect.”

“ So do I. But I tell thee that if spared there is that in him, which will yet prevail in spite of all we have done.”

“ Give me time, let me consult Heaven further in prayer.”

“ Consult who or what you like, but remember, you must return with me.” So saying, Cromwell abruptly ended the conference, and, signifying his wish to obtain a short repose, bade his host good night.

The room into which the great Parliamentary had been shown, was one of those specimens of comfort, elegance and grandeur we sometimes see in an old house in the country. Tapestryed with some storied scenes of knightly emprise, it was dark with oak carving and sombre hangings, each post of the hearse-like bed was surmounted by sable plumes, whilst the cumbrous articles of furniture were in keeping with the apartment they stood in.

When the future Lord Protector found himself left alone, he examined with jealous scrutiny every part of

the room. He lifted the arras, sounded the panneling, examined the bed, pricking the rich hangings with his dagger, looking beneath it and even "searching impossible places"—Having done this he carefully opened a door, which led into a small closet, through which was another door admitting to a gallery and organ-loft near the roof at one end of the lofty hall, and where, unseen himself, the General condescended to play the spy and eavesdropper. For Cromwell was mean as he was unscrupulous, cruel and hypocritical; he hesitated at nothing to forward the great object of his ambition; an object he was never destined to attain.—The Crown of England.

As Cromwell looked from the gallery into the space beneath, all was dark, save the small circle of light thrown out by the still unexpired logs on the hearth. Except the Knight and his lady all had retired and they were dimly seen conferring together, as the fitful flame of the half expired embers revealed the remains of the late revel.

Listeners, it is said seldom are favoured by hearing their own praises. In the present instance Cromwell heard that which might, to one less obdurate, have done service.

"Again I bid you beware of this man," he heard Lady Chavenlay say, as her husband sat before the fire. "Nay," she continued, "let him beware lest having deceived others, he deceive not himself. For, as sure as you are a living man, he will never sit on England's Throne—No not even if he strive to wade to it in blood."

"He has reasons sound for what he urges," said Sir Ralph, "they carry conviction with them.—I myself cannot recede — I must to London."

"An if you do," said the lady, "you will never return here again, save like one lost body and soul. An if you do, this unscrupulous man will sacrifice you, as he has others, to his own pride and purposes. Nay, he has gained power already by an hypocrisy so gross, that I marvel you yourself see not through it."

"There are moments," said Sir Ralph, "when all minor considerations ought to yield to the public good. The man Charles is a bitter tyrant. He must die."

"Horrible," said Lady Chavenlay, "and such then is the result of your midnight conference with this bad man, and, for this you are to be dragged to London. But remember, that our actions follow us even beyond-the

grave. We may lose riches, friends, all, every worldly good, but our actions are the only title-deeds of which we cannot be disinherited. And when all else is naught, they will have their value duly confirmed by those sure destroyers of all other earthly things, time and death."

Sir Ralph groaned, whilst his Lady continued. "This Cromwell is a villain."

"How!" hastily interrupted Sir Ralph, "Hush wife, you go far."

"No," she continued, "not further than truth compels. He is a villain I say, who will doubtless arrive through his own wickedness, and the weakness of his tools, at such power as to crush and overwhelm all who stand in his path. But let him look to his own safety, for it will not be established upon the love of the people, but their fear, and will contain in itself the seeds of its own destruction — If he does this deed, mark me, he will live a joyless man and die hated and unregretted."

Sir Ralph groaned again, "Still," he muttered, "I must to Town."

"Why should you," she replied, "what have you to do with this Murder?"

" Murder — Aye but you would call the great deed of Brutus by the same name."

" Precisely. Believe me it is not easy to forgive the powerful whom we have injured. This man's fears are driving him on to that, which was began by his interest."

" His own argument," said Sir Ralph, " We have gone so far as to cut the Lion's claws and to secure our freedom we must cut off the head."

" Dreadful," said Lady Chavenlay with a shudder.

" But that I agree not in. I want but liberty for the people. Freedom, reform. Yes, I must to the Parliament."

" Reform," said the lady bitterly, " what that common hack again. Hast not had enough of Reform ? Believe me there is nothing but corruption in that Parliament. Their very religion is fanaticism. The leprosy of selfishness pervades them all. If you would have a rogue you may place your finger at random. From high to low there is nothing radical amongst them but corruption."

The Knight seemed annoyed. He arose from his seat and strode up and down the apartment, at length he stopped.

"What would you have," he said. "My duty, my safety, all, every thing, urges me to go, and go I must, spite of all thou canst urge against it," and thus saying Sir Ralph abruptly left the Hall.

The future Lord Protector had heard enough.

As he hung over the gallery endeavouring to catch every word, he was like some bloated spider watching the struggles of its victim, and as Sir Ralph left the Hall, he quietly withdrew into his own apartment.

"Pooh," he said, "what a fool to argue with a woman — The Turks manage better." — As he muttered this to himself he carefully bolted the door, and then drawing off his cumbrous boots, threw himself upon the bed, in order to obtain a short repose 'ere he returned to London; where indeed his absence was unknown even to his own servants.

CHAPTER XI.

BRIGHT rose the sun on the morning which followed Christmas-day at Chavenlay. Storm and wind had vanished, and as the eye travelled over the white prospect from the windows of the mansion, the winter scene, albeit it was desolate, was beautiful. Every vestige of the fury of the elements, such as torn-up trees, and fragments of branches were together with the shrubs, fields, and building around, alike covered with a glittering sheet of snow. But although the morning looked bright and joyous at Chavenlay, the minds of some of its inmates were oppressed and heavy. "Boon nature," (although she offers all like a bounteous house-wife) cannot at all times lure us to appreciate her favours.

Sir Ralph had been summoned by the relentless

General ere it was light, and warned to be ready to depart. In fact Cromwell (after a couple of hours repose) had held a conversation, whilst he dressed, with the gaunt Huett, and made strict enquiries into the politics of the family.

"You have looked after these people, Cornet Huett," he said, "as I directed?"

"Closely."

"Well?"

"They are all malignants, except the man, he alone is honest."

"Half insane you mean," said Cromwell.

"Exactly, if it so please your Excellency, there's nothing in him, he is a dreamer."

"More, he's a fool—he argues with his wife—never argue with a woman," and Cromwell pinched the ear of the evil looking familiar.

"I never do," said Huett.

"Right," said Cromwell, "The Turks are more wise, they sew them up in sacks and throw them into the Bosphorus when troublesome."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Huett.

"What makes you laugh, idiot?" said Cromwell inducing his doublet.

"To think of the fate, Mistress Cromwell is destined to," returned the messenger.

"Out on thee fool," said the General, "I cannot get rid of that trouble so easily —"

"As you can of others you wot of," returned Huett.

"Pshaw, you talk of what you don't understand," * and the general threw his boot at his familiar's head.

"You wish to knock off my head too, General," said the ruffian taking up the boot and throwing it back again.

"Not till you have struck off a better man's," replied Cromwell, returning the compliment.

"Is that to be my task," enquired the messenger.

"You must be there to assist," said Cromwell, "if it comes to extremity."

* Cromwell was in the habit of playing practical jokes with his tools. He daubed the face of one of the regicides with ink after signing the warrant for the King's execution.

Huett laughed as he bobbed his head ; and the boot throwing continued till the pair had completely warmed themselves by the exercise ; after which the General hastily finished his toilet and descended into the great Hall.

CHAPTER XII.

THE morning which succeeded Christmas day, we have said was bright and beautiful, displaying a smiling contrast to that which had preceded it. It was indeed one of those contrasts we more especially remark in the vicinity of the sea coast; and remarking, experience a feeling of regret whilst we behold the dire effects of that which has been; and the bland softness, almost akin to mockery, of that which is. There lies the once gallant barque high and dry upon the beach, a bare ribbed wreck, a ghastly object, which we saw so madly dashed upon the waters a few hours before; so dreadful a sea boiling around it, that none could approach to save, and here, upon "this bank and shoal," with but a few hours intervening, and how changed the scene; what a mockery we almost say. Had but this oily wave, this

brilliant sky shewn themselves a short time back, and we had not now looked upon the ruin before us.

Such are doubtless oftentimes the thoughts of those whose destiny forces them to look upon the ocean changes of the wild sea beach, and such were the feelings of the Mistress of the Hall of Chavenlay and her daughter, as they beheld from the windows of the mansion, the departure of Sir Ralph in company with the man of all others they most feared and detested. The smiling scene before them seemed to have come as in mockery, after the wreck had taken place, and they both felt a degree of discontent and desolation, which only the time's abuse, could have caused. It was all in vain that they tried to settle themselves to the employments, which Ladies of rank were then wont to look upon as the duties of their station. The house affairs might indeed employ the hands, but the mind was distraught elsewhere. Great and important were the events at that moment going on in England. London especially was the scene in which the last act of a fearful drama was about to take place — A drama in which many of their own Kith and Kin and allies had

recently played a part, and sealed their services with their blood.

A drama, presenting as the great poet words it,

“A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,

And monarchs to behold the swelling scene—”

a drama in which one of the most noble amongst mankind — a pattern to his fellow mortals — was to fall before a crew of as malignant, selfish, and brutal wretches, as ever were hounded on to murder and pillage by a more designing villain than themselves. Indeed, unsafe as was the communication betwixt town and town, from the circumstance of so many armed ruffians of the war prowling about, “masterless men,” still Lady C. had gathered tidings of deep import. The King, she heard, after having been dragged from Carisbrook to Hurst Castle, a desolate blockhouse projecting into the sea, at high tides scarcely connected with the Isle of Wight, was carried to Windsor by the homicide Harrison (a wretched, half insane destructive, formerly a butcher, and who had openly boasted he would assassinate his prisoner by the way), whence it was daily expected he would be taken to London. Under these

circumstances Lady Chavenlay felt that her home was becoming intolerable. A degree of melancholy, gloom and horror pervaded the place which weighed upon her heart. In those times change of residence and scene, as is customary in our own, was seldom thought of; families usually lived out their days contented with the amusements around them—their dogs, their hawks, their horses and the sports and pastimes appertaining.

So that it somewhat surprised the household when the mistress announced that she was about to depart for the metropolis. Travelling by carriage at that period, was by no means common or easy in winter, and it was, therefore, on horseback that the ladies made the journey, accompanied and escorted by a troop of armed attendants, sufficiently numerous to protect them from the dangers of the road.

CHAPTER XIII.

Our scene now necessarily shifts to London, and certainly at no period of England's history did the metropolis exhibit a more extraordinary spectacle.

Amongst the entire populace of England, six years of civil butchery, with its accompaniments of famine and taxation, had produced a strong reaction, as during that period, they had ample leisure to make comparisons between fancied wrong and real oppression ; indeed in financial matters alone, their eyes had been opened. For instance, the royal expenditure, (even including the much disputed item of ship money) was within a million. The expenditure voted by the parliament which opposed Charles, and cried out upon his extravagance, was more than ten millions ; nay, in merry England, up to these republican doings, the English kings had been wont to obtain their taxes from the nobles and the gentry, and it

was the self-seeking demagogues of the Cromwell school who found out the secret of wringing from the hard hands of the working poor, the pittance which was to have fed and clothed them. So true it is, that when professional demagogues and people-benefiting orators, manage to gull the ignorant, they never fail to set their feet upon their necks and crush them to the very earth.

The citizens of London accordingly felt themselves at this period bound down under a military despotism so terrible that it was almost unbearable ; buff and bandelier, basket-hilt and matchlock, these were the masters ; soldiers ruled in every man's house, and the depressed citizen bent his head as he walked : to mention the King's name with commiseration was an offence, to revile and curse him a virtue, nay the Parliament itself was as much coerced as the nation at large, and when a majority was found to be somewhat in favour of Charles, a body of troopers seized and thrust them into a dark hole in Westminster, named Hell, a system of coercion repeated as often as such symptoms of wavering manifested themselves. Two revolts of the populace in favour of the King were also crushed by Cromwell with his usual

ferocity; indeed the whole city seemed one great guard-house, numbers of the troopers being stabled and lodged in Westminster Abbey and other religious edifices, where they displayed their destructive propensities, by hacking to pieces and destroying every thing that was ornamental and sacred within their reach.

To dwell upon so grand a drama, as this epoch presents, would necessarily take from the interest of that portion of our story which relates to the lesser personages connected therewith, yet as the fortunes of such individuals are more or less bound up with the troubles of the times, it becomes necessary more fully to dwell upon them.

Great then were the efforts made by Lady Chavenlay on her arrival in London to supersede the influence of Cromwell with her husband, but it was all in vain that both herself and daughter endeavoured to dissuade him from participation in the evil deeds then concerting, for the arch deceiver had so impressed the knight with a necessity for the King's death that he was deaf to their arguments.

On arriving in London the ladies had sought a

residence in the house of a relative, a nobleman who had faithfully followed the King through all the troubles of the times. With this gentleman Sir Ralph had been oftentimes placed in opposition, and now refused to hold any intercourse, carrying his party feeling so high, that in order to avoid further importunity from Lady Chavenlay he secluded himself in an obscure lodging in Westminster.

It is indeed extraordinary to contemplate the skill and perseverance, with which the great mover of the events then taking place, managed to keep his instruments up to the work in hand.

As for Sir Ralph Chavenlay, no sooner had he committed himself with his party than

“Consideration like an angel came

And whipp’d the offending Adam out of him—”

seized with remorse he sought Cromwell like one possessed, and begged him for the love of Heaven to abandon his designs against the King; but the general turned upon him an eye of death —

“Hence idiot,” he said, “your folly is enough to undo us all;” and upon finding that the knight of

Chavenlay was irrecoverably lost to the cause, he gave orders that he should be taken to some place of security, and carefully watched and guarded like a madman.

Of the members of the House of Commons, only sixty-nine could be collected, whose hardiness fitted them for participation in the deed, and most of these shrank back with dismay when they came to see the royal victim face to face.

Consultations were held in the painted chamber, and meetings were convened in secret out of the way places again and again, ere the courage of these men could be screwed to the sticking point. They spoke their fears in whispers at one time, and at others sought by violent declamation to drown their scruples, till at length the King was removed to an ancient structure called Edward the Confessor's Palace, where he was guarded with a care consistent with the terrors of those who sought his life. Thirty troopers, picked from amongst the most savage ruffians in the army, were placed in an apartment above the one in which the King was confined; two soldiers were also placed in his bed-room; sentinels stood in every passage in Westminster Hall and on the

leads and windows of the houses that looked towards the Hall, whilst at the back doors of the premises was heard the busy clink of hammer and trowel, as workmen bricked up the entrances. Such was the caution used by Cromwell to secure the murder of the King, a vigilance he afterwards felt obliged himself to use, in order to save his own person from the assassin's steel.

In the meantime as the great drama progressed, the regicide junta sat in terror whilst they deliberated, even although they surrounded themselves by both foot and horse soldiers. They felt like a nest of reptiles driven into a corner, and that if their venomous work were not done out of hand, they would themselves be crushed, and thus was the fate of the King at length speedily agreed upon.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON the morning of the sixteenth of January, 1649, the citizens of London were early a-stir, the opening day broke dark and lowering, the cold was intense, the snow thick upon the ground. Slowly crept the grey light, faintly and gradually developing street and lane and alley. Those citizens already stirring on this eventful morning, as they looked abroad, saw as the first streaks of light dimly progressed, the beetling stories here and there illumined by small twinkling candles, which flitted about in the upper windows, whilst the glow of a newly kindled fire gleamed through the diamond panes of the lower apartments, discovering the depths of those spacious low roofed chambers common to the dwellings of old London. A sign that the inhabitants were bestirring themselves, and preparing to set forth in order to take the last look upon England's King.

Indeed, as we have before said, the citizens of London, except that portion of thorough-going destructives, ever to be found in the sinks and stews of a large town, were stricken with remorse for the part they had taken against the King, and the secret horror felt on that morning was remembered to the dying day of many now hastening to be in time for the awful sight ; so true is it that

“ Between the acting of a dreadful thing,
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.”

“ and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.”

Even those who had been but lukewarm in the war, as caring for neither party — “ the waiters upon providence,” even they began to ask each other, why this thing was ? For spite of the guarded secrecy with which all had been done, it was pretty well known that the whole proceeding was without the sanction of law or justice.

As the morning wore on, the throng of citizens were seen moving on towards Whitehall. Grave and serious in look ; a half nod or whispered greeting as friend was

passed or overtaken, with perhaps a shrug and meaning glance, as companies of musketeers were seen falling in, or a squadron of horse rode past, to take up the position they had been ordered to occupy, in case any popular demonstration in favour of Charles should shew itself.

Cold and comfortless felt the air, as the crowd pressed on through thoroughfares and localities, whose names are now blotted from the memory of man. For the metropolis, at that period, presented all those old features and points of interest which had existed when the Norman Kings reigned; noble old castellated structures, and dark monastic edifices, with their arched passages and cloistered precincts, which, indeed the republicans were even then busied in demolishing and destroying.

Amongst those hurrying onwards, was a tall man clad in the dress of a Country Gentleman of the period, and except that there was nothing violent or outrageous in his demeanour, he might have been taken by the crowd for an unhappy maniac. Every now and then he stopped and wildly regarded the tide of people around him, and then after a pause, hurried on again. "Great Heavens!" he said, "has it come to this, and I too have helped the

consummation, oh, what have I done? what have I done?" And thus in alternate fits of deep thought and sudden impulse, Sir Ralph, who had escaped from Cromwell's minions, threaded his way along the narrow streets of old London, till as he approached Whitehall, he found, in common with the multitude, that there was no possibility of getting near that building: dense masses of soldiers, filled up the entire space for some distance, and as he strained his eyes towards the scaffold, nothing but helmet and breast-plate and bright weapon and noble charger was to be seen.

As the populace beheld this they understood its meaning in an instant. The Royal Victim surrounded by this phalanx, could not possibly be heard should he address them when brought out.

"Stand back," said a trooper to one of the crowd, "where the fiend do you wish to go to?"

"To take a last look of my King," said the Citizen.

"What know ye of Kings?" said the trooper, "We'll have no more Kings in England, the man Charles is about to suffer as an example to all who would usurp Kingly power."

"Let me gain a few paces to the front," said the Citizen, "I would fain look upon his glorious face once more."

"A malignant, a malignant," said a second soldier turning in his saddle and looking at the Citizen, "smite him," and suiting the action to the word, he struck the Citizen down.

"Great Heaven," cried Sir Ralph, "and this man is a free born Englishman, oh, what have we done, what have we done?"

"Cease that howling there," cried the trooper, "unless you wish for a taste of my weapon too."

"Let me pass onwards," said Sir Ralph, "I would fain hear the poor King speak when brought out."

"Then bid him bawl for your especial benefit," said the trooper laughing, "for no whit nearer will any one get this day, till his head is off his shoulders,—stand back, I say, or I smite!"

Sir Ralph grasped his sword-hilt at the trooper's threat, but the next moment he was forced backwards amongst the press.

As the time approached in which the victim was to be brought forth, the hubbub consequent upon the coercive

brutality of the soldiery subsided, and a deep silence ensued, only occasionally interrupted by the conversation of a knot of Cavaliers who spoke their feelings in under tones.

"They say Noll has found it difficult to get an executioner," said a youth, whose face was closely muffled in his cloak.

"Aye, so I heard," returned the person addressed, "but Axtel was sent this morning for Brandon the Tower hangman."

. "Brandon has refused," said Sir Felix Falcon, "no bribe could induce him to come."

"Nevertheless, Brandon was brought to Whitehall, by force," said a third speaker, "and a villain named Huett, under promise of a thousand crowns, is to help him! nay! several ruffians are to be in readiness."

"You may say that, De Beverstone," said another Cavalier, "for no less than thirty-eight sergeants were collected together last night, in a house in Rosemary Lane, and a hundred pounds offered to any who would stand by and help."

"Truly so," said the first speaker, "but you should

add, that not one of the ruffians, picked out as they were from amongst the greatest caitiffs in the army, could be persuaded to undertake the office."

"Art sure of this De Beverstone," enquired another. "Nay, said De Beverstone, I had it from one, whose conscience has suddenly turned qualmish; he told me that a terrible scene of butchery will take place, and the King resist this morning."

"Gracious powers," said Sir Ralph Chavenlay, who had overheard this conversation, "what mean ye gentlemen?" "Why that staples have been driven into the flooring of the scaffold, and that the King will be dragged down with ropes, and he go not willingly to slaughter."

"Can this be true," said Sir Ralph wildly, "oh, Sirs let me pass! Let me out! What have I done! What have I done!"

As Sir Ralph exerted himself to get away, he was nearly ridden down by a couple of mounted officers who were pressing through the crowd.

"Best keep your remarks to yourself here, Ralph Chavenlay," said one in passing, "unless you wish for a blow in the teeth."

"What! is freedom of speech denied us," cried Sir Ralph, turning upon the officer, "oh! would that I had reflected ere I became involved in this crime."

"It's too late to think of that now," said the officer, "Room there men," he cried, "right and left close, I have work to do down yonder, and must pass."

"That's one of the villains hired to be near the scaffold, should the victim resist," said De Beverstone, as Huett made his way towards the scaffold. As he neared it, two figures suddenly were seen upon the platform, whose appearance, was as singular as it was horrible.

These were the executioner and his assistant, whose disguises were so frightful, that they had evidently been assumed more to strike terror into the victim, than to shield themselves from the public eye. Clad in coarse, tight-fitting woollen garments, the peculiar costume of slaughtermen of that period, their faces were concealed by black masks, and long elf-locks of false hair; in addition to which, the chief executioner wore a large hat, the brim of which, flapped down over his mask.

• As these terrible men took their station beside the

block, a shudder ran through the whole assemblage. Meantime although the bloody business, seemed to be now completely prepared, the stage waited, and the principal actors apparently eschewed their parts.

Such was indeed the case, the scaffold, the axe, the coerced headsman, all stood in readiness, and yet, at that moment of intense expectation, there was division amongst the murderers, both as to the executioner and the warrant to be given him.

Two villains named Hunks and Phazee, had been suddenly seized with compunction, and insisted upon having their names struck out of the warrant. Chosen to guard the King, from their being amongst the most violent and brutal of his enemies, a better knowledge of the victim had totally altered their sentiments towards him.

And if such were the feelings of these ruffians, what indeed must have been those of the Knight of Chavenlay, as he stood gazing upon the dark scaffold and its grisly attendants.

At length the clock from the neighbouring Abbey struck *one*, and as the sound floated through the clear

frosty air, the King appeared upon the scaffold. Who shall attempt to describe the terrible interest of that moment! The man himself as he appeared, so noble in look! so majestic in the great part he played! standing in all the undaunted majesty of his nature. "To pass," as he himself worded it, "from a corruptible to an incorruptible Crown."

Altogether there was something so unscrupulous, so foul and unnatural, in the manner in which all had been done, that the magnitude of the act, the responsibility to Heaven, for that which was to ensue seemed to those assembled as though it were a crime, even to stand by and witness it.

As soon as the King stepped upon the scaffold he threw a penetrating look around. He had intended to address a few words to the people, ere he died, but the Regicides had cared for that, and he saw nothing but dense masses of soldiery on every side. Except Bishop Juxon and his attendant Herbert, he had no friend there.

The troops who had lately taken every opportunity of reviling him, were now silent and orderly, not a sound was to be heard except the faint cries and blessings of the populace in the distance.

In this extremity, the King whose whole demeanour was most Royal, turned to the Bishop and Colonel Tomlison, and addressed to them a few sentences, to the effect that he died a Martyr for the liberties of the people of England. "For," he added, "if I had consented to reign by the mere despotism of the sword, I might have been permitted to live and remain King of England still, but every institution of the original Constitution of the country has been subverted—I die," he added, "a Christian of the Church of England."

Nothing that had been done to intimidate, and take from him the royalty of his nature, could in the least affect him. The axe which had been enveloped in black crape, and laid upon the block, was moved by some attendant, as if to disturb the Monarch's speech and make him falter, but he only turned, and bade the person beware. "Touch not the axe," he said, "if the edge is spoiled it will be the worse for me."

The executioner, despite the hardness of his nature, seemed unnerved, he drew near the King, knelt and entreated forgiveness for what he was about to do.

"No," said Charles sharply, "I forgive no subject of mine, who comes to shed my blood."

The man seemed to falter as the King's eye rested upon his masked face, but the second mask stepped up — and the preparations proceeded. As the King put up his long hair, the executioner bowed, and begged of him to push it more under the cap. Throwing off his cloak, the King then turned to the Bishop, stooped his head, and took off his George, which he handed to him, saying with emphasis "Remember." * He then took off his doublet, and the executioner drew forth the axe.

"Place the block so that it will not shake," said the King.

"It is firm, Sir," replied the man.

"I will say a short prayer," said the King, "and when I hold out my hand thus — strike."

It was a moment of intense agony to the people, the faces of the troopers looked ghastly. The King stood for a few moments in deep thought, and looked towards the Heavens, and his lips were seen to move. He then slowly knelt down, and laid his head upon the block. The executioner heaved up his axe, and a whole minute

* No explanation of this mysterious injunction has ever been given.

elapsed whilst this dreadful scene was exhibited, ere the King stretched out his hand.

A deep groan and a cry of agony was heard as the axe descended. It emanated from the assembled multitude; and those who heard that cry, remembered it to their last hour. In winter's nights, many described it to their children, and its mention was sufficient for more than a century afterwards, to make the hearers shudder.

After the blow was struck, the second mask stooped, and took up the head; he stepped to the edge of the scaffold and holding it up, cried aloud, " behold the head of a Traitor." A deep and angry hubbub was heard immediately amongst the people, and the next moment the iron mass around was seen to heave and move, then arose a clattering din, as they backed, wheeled, and unlocked their closed up files, whilst those troopers immediately in contact with the indignant populace, faced about and unceremoniously riding down the crowd, dispersed them.

Amidst the confusion and danger of this scene, a youth seizing the bridle of a trooper's horse bore the animal back, as the soldier was spurring over a prostrate body

in his path. The young man raised the body from the ground, as the angry horseman cut savagely at him with his weapon, and finally succeeded in transferring the wounded man to the custody of several Cavaliers, who were at hand, and who immediately conveyed it in safety out of the crowd. The prostrate form was that of Sir Ralph Chavenlay who had fainted, and but for the timely assistance of De Beverstone, must have been killed, as the soldiery dispersed the populace.

Ere De Beverstone mounted his horse that night for Dover, *en route* to France, he caused the sick Knight to be conveyed to the house at which Lady Chavenlay and her daughter were located, whence he was soon afterwards conveyed by easy stages into Gloucestershire.

CHAPTER XV.

AGAIN with the licence granted to novelists, we change the scene and return to Chavenlay.

Some three months have passed since the events before narrated. Snow and storm have given place to smiling weather.

“And well apparelled April on the heel,
Of limping winter treads.”

The season is forward for the time of year, all nature seems to rejoice. The beasts, the birds, the whistling clodpoll, all seem happy. Without the building how lovely the aspect. The setting sun rests upon those old walls, and lights up the multitudinous windows in small flakes of fire. The old Norman Chapel too, and the grassy space between the mansion and the belt of shrubbery, and the quaintly trimmed garden with its

intersecting walks, and the old stone summer-house, overhanging the park-wall beyond, all look smiling and beautiful.

But if such is the aspect without that old Hall, within there is sickness and sorrow, sharp misery and despair.

In that wasted form, those care-worn cheeks and perished hair, is it possible that we behold the once proud owner of Chavenlay. The man seems blasted as by the hot breath of a poisoned wind.

He paces his old Hall with uneven and disordered steps. He wanders from chamber to chamber, from gallery to passage. He sits down to rest his wearied limbs, but rest is apparently only to be found in motion, and not found then, and as he wanders in its search he continually stops, looks furtively over his shoulder, and asks himself the ever recurring question. "Oh! what have we done?" "What have we done?"

So are his days passed, and the night brings no respite, for as soon as the shadows descend, the knight fancies himself haunted by a fiend — a gaunt demon in a blue close-fitting butcher's jerkin, a black mask and a hideous beard. This evil companion constantly attends

him, and looks the exact representation of the Executioner, who, three months before, struck off the head of Charles.

Sorrow sits upon the brows of Lady Chavenlay, and the once joyous Charlotte; they seek to administer to the comfort of the knight, and to sooth his griefs; but the memory of that hour, in which he beheld the execution before Whitehall, is not to be done away. It is "a rooted sorrow," and day after day sees him dwindle towards the grave.

But there is yet another cause which adds to the discomfort of the Mistress of Chavenlay and her lovely daughter, unprotected as they now are by the authoritative influence of the knight's care. The presiding genius of the republic remembers but too well the sentiments of that entire household; and he has marked the family down for fine and sequestration. The household accordingly are placed under strict surveillance. The arch-villain Huett is there in possession, with some half-dozen followers, grim looking, and unscrupulous as himself. They are indeed virtually the lords and masters of the establishment, and taking advantage of

the quelled spirit of the Knight, carry on a system of annoyance hardly to be borne by the inhabitants. They take leave to term themselves commissioners. But old Thrift, the Steward, takes leave to doubt the reality of any commission they hold, except one from the enemy of mankind.

Under the circumstances in which the ladies of the establishment find themselves, it would be impossible for them to remain under their own roof, did not their duty oblige them to be in constant attendance upon the afflicted Knight, whose movements they watch with the utmost anxiety. The leech shakes his head as he observes how matters are progressing. " 'Tis a case Madam," he says, "beyond my art. The mind, the mind. Some dire scene is branded on the memory, and the very current of the blood is affected. If we could divert the patient's thoughts we might then hope, but (and the leech glanced at the ruffians seated before the ample fire-place,) unhappily all here serves to keep alive the remembrance of what has been." "I'll cure the old gentleman," hiccup'd the gaunt Huett, staggering half drunk towards the Lady. "Look ye, Madam, let

your husband stick to this physic as I do. What tell you me of doctors and potions, your sennas and mannas, your stew'd prunes and friars balsams. Give him canary sack and mulled claret, and if that sufficeth not, and he must die, why then, Lady, I offer myself in his place."

The lady shudders as she escapes to the shelter of the upper apartments, where the interposition of strong doors, and her own servants, give both herself and daughter a sort of security against the ruffians in possession, and, who being generally half drunk all day long, content themselves for the present with continued visits to the cellar.

There is however little security where ruffians have the upper hand, and miserable is the state of that household. Most of the servants have already deserted the Hall in disgust, or been forcibly expelled, and the iron heel of oppression, is upon the inhabitants of the neighbouring village, in the shape of a party of soldiers quartered there.

Thus passed the Summer, and again the winds of December sweep over the Cotswolds. It is the anniversary of the day on which our story opens. Christmas

has come again ; but, at the Hall of Chavenlay there is neither feasting, revelling, or any other sign of the joyful time. Meanwhile the Knight has grown worse. The one object which continually haunts his steps the imaginary demon, has brought him low, even to his bed, where he lies prostrate in body, and distraught in mind.

Lady Chavenlay seeks the aid of religious consolation, in the hope that its calm comforting doctrine, may sooth the patient's mind, but unfortunately the Chaplain of the Hall is a rigid puritan, whose opinions are altogether in favour of the party uppermost.

He is an uncharitable religionist, strict, precise, overbearing and unfeeling. He calls the state of the patient one of utter madness, designates the execution of the King a glorious act, and threatens a dark room and a whip, as a cure for the fancies the Knight is haunted with. He is in fact leagued with the revolutionary party below stairs, and hopes, when the lands are parcelled out amongst the faithful, to obtain a comfortable slice.

It is midday in that old Hall. Christmas day ; but

as we before said without sign or signal of the hallowed time. Holly and mistletoe even are absent; a savour of Puritanism is over the whole place, a dark severe melancholy aspect, suitable to the times. The stables are empty—the kennel deserted—the falconry a ruin—Men in cropped heads, high crowned hats, and sad coloured suits, stalk about, both within and without. They look like conspirators plotting mischief as they converse in low tones, computing acres, arguing about division of spoil, suggesting alterations, and even counting the minutes the proprietor has to live; for these socialists, if, we may so term them, impatiently await his demise ere they proceed to sack the house, and seize upon wife and daughter.

Such then is the situation of the once proud family of Chavenlay, under the stern rule of the conquerors—a situation all must come to when self-seeking men bear sway.

If we look again upon that winter garden a change is even there. The yew hedges are grubbed up—the ornamented terraces destroyed—the quaint cut arms and armorial bearings thrown down—the encroaching

hand of the destroyer has made even the winter aspect of that garden more barren.

The day on which Gaston de Beverstone promised to be there, if in life, has arrived. Since that word was given, a whole year of adventure, danger and action has elapsed, and no news from Chavenlay has ever reached him. Yet, as the winter's wind roars amidst the tall trees of the park, with those winds, he is there again. With arms folded he stands and watches the garden-gate, and as the clock from the distant mansion announces the hour in which Charlotte should appear, and she comes not, a foreboding of evil seizes upon his heart.

Under every circumstance of danger to himself, De Beverstone has kept his appointment; each moment he remains is fraught with peril, for the usurper has set a price upon his head — yet he has just crossed the seas to be there. As the time passes on, and he still finds himself the sole occupant of the garden, his forebodings become changed almost to certainty. He judges of her he loves by the high standard of his own truth and loyalty. If she fails, the inference is that she is either dead or under some difficulty, which renders her coming im-

possible. As the shadows of evening began to descend, De Beverstone resolved, at all hazard, to seek the Hall. Traversing the snow clad garden, he reached the gate at the other end. It was locked, but, as he tried it, a key was inserted from the opposite side. A moment more and he may be blessed by the sight of Charlotte. But no, the moon, which now shines brightly, discovers old Simon Thrift. The old man started back, for his nerves were unstrung, but uttering a cry of joy, as he recognized the young Cavalier, he hastily delivered a letter to him. The youth tore it open. It was from Charlotte, and worded somewhat thus, —

“Till this moment, dear Gaston, I have been hindered from meeting or sending to you. If you have yourself been able to keep promise, I conjure you to fly. We are surrounded by enemies, whose presence renders it unsafe for you to remain a moment in this neighbourhood.”

A few words from old Simon sufficed to explain to De Beverstone the situation of all at Chavenlay. The angry spot is upon his brow as he listens. “It is like them all,” he said, — “villains and robbers as they

are. And yet these are the men through whose interference the people of England were to reap such beneficial reforms."

"Alas," said the old steward, "they have brought strange reforms to our house—for the place is well nigh sack'd. Sir Ralph is in extremity,—the ladies in peril, and the house haunted from garret to cellar."

As Gaston looked upon the old man, and observed the change which anxiety and terror had made upon him, he became still more alarmed.

"The house haunted," he said, "what mean ye, old man?"

"That a terrible apparition appears nightly in Sir Ralph's chamber; wanders through the apartment, and then vanishes in flames of fire, whilst horrible noises are heard all over the house."

"I believe not in the existence of such spectres," said De Beverstone.

"But I have seen it," urged the old man, "and so did the other servants ere they fled from the Hall."

"At what hour does this apparition come?" enquired the youth.

" Exactly at one."

" And what semblance takes it ?"

" The very figure Sir Ralph has described himself so long to have been haunted by — a tall spectre with a long beard, a black mask and a flapped hat."

" Enough," said Gaston, " I see it all, a system of terror is kept up by these villains, in order to scare the servants from the house, and hide their own doings from the neighbourhood. But with Heaven's help, I will discover their villany. You must give me the means of secret admission to the Hall this night."

" Oh ! my good Sir," said Simon, " I pray you to pause ere you venture upon such a step ; you know not the terrible nature of these men."

" Nay," returned Gaston, " it is because I do know the nature of these men that I adventure."

" Alas ! they would strike you dead with as little remorse as they would brush a spider from the wall."

" No," said Gaston, " thanks to my youth and strength, and right arm, such a feat is not quite so easily achieved."

" But you are alone."

"And alone will I encounter them," returned Gaston, "Enough good Simon, give me, I say, the means of admittance to the Hall, and at the hour of need I will be near you this night, for good or ill, as Heaven wills it."

As the old steward gazed upon De Beverstone there was a something so determined in the youth's eye that he felt reassured. It seemed as if Heaven had at last sent a friend in the hour of need, and hastily giving him the key of a small postern, which admitted to the mansion by a secret passage, after receiving instructions, the old man took his way towards the Hall, whilst De Beverstone plunging into the deep cover of the plantation was quickly lost to sight.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN our own peaceful days, and whilst living under the benign influence of law and justice in England, we should doubtless feel considerable surprize at the spectacle of a domain usurped and a household discomfited by persons, who had forcibly taken possession and carried on the most unscrupulous designs, against those connected with the property so invaded.

After and during the Civil Wars however such things were, and many an old house in England could tell a fearful tale of evil deeds committed by the "cankers" of that war, and quietly winked at by those in authority. Such nefarious proceedings afforded an easy mode of rewarding the followers of the great Republican, at the expense of those who were opposed to his principles and administration. At such a time,

" Liberty plucks justice by the nose ;

and quite athwart

Goes all decorum."

During his brief conversation with the old Steward, De Beverstone had pretty well made out the design of the Republicans. Placed in temporary possession their intent was to make that possession permanent. By their representations to their employer they had already reported the family, as dangerous to the interests of the state, and fit subjects to be made examples of.

As for the gaunt Huett, when half drunk, he openly expressed an intention of constituting himself the future possessor of Chavenlay. He meant, he said, to wive, to take the fair Charlotte to himself, and that too as soon as the old knight condescended to quit the scene. "Only," he hiccupped, "the old gentleman takes so long to die. I think I must give him a helping hand. If he is so qualmish about having given his vote for the execution of the King, why don't he die at once and have done with it. There's Brandon too, he turned chicken-hearted, sorrowed and sickened, pined and died, three months after he had struck off the King's head, and all for want of the pardon, forsooth, which the man Charles refused him on the scaffold,"

"Pshaw," he said to his companions, "I hate such

poor sneaks. I was a saint myself when snuffling served the turn, but now I'm a sinner like the rest,—yes," continued the democrat warming with his subject, "now we have scared away all the liveried slaves here, I'll tell you my opinion, the sway of such people as these Chav-enlays is over, they have had their day, and our turn is come,—all property belongs to the people. *We* have got this domain, somebody else gets the next, we'll take care of ours, they'll take care of theirs. I shall marry the daughter here, you can take a cast with the dice-box for the mother. Share and share alike is fair play, and there's pickings here for all."

It was near midnight ere De Beverstone found opportunity of admitting himself into the Hall. At that hour, the lights which ever and anon had passed from window to window, as he watched the dark melancholy looking building, were no longer to be observed.

In happier hours the youth had oftentimes spent whole days at the Hall, so that he found his knowledge of the place of no small service, whilst carefully picking his way along the passages and chambers, which led through each other as was customary in old mansions of that time.

Having gathered from the Steward the exact localities through which the apparition was wont to progress, he laid his plans accordingly. Not doubting, that with only two females, the leech and an old domestic to deal with, the ghost had hitherto had it all his own way, and managed its "exits and its entrances" at advantage, he determined to enter the room tenanted by Cromwell on occasion of his visit to Chavenlay the year before, and which was only to be approached by the gallery overlooking the great hall. This was the spot where the old Steward told him, the servants ere they fled from the Hall had seen the apparition, and in Cromwell's chamber De Beverstone resolved to confront it.

Fears on his own account he had none, neither had he any qualms as to the numbers of those whose machinations he came to oppose, and yet it was not altogether without some degree of awe, that he found himself groping along dark passages and deserted chambers in the dead of the night, compelled every now and then to pause and listen as the wind sighed, and some distant door clapped to. The old steward had purposely directed him to a wing of the mansion totally unin-

habited, so that he reached the gallery over the great hall, undetected by any of Huett's party.

The clock from the gate-house without, struck twelve as he looked down from this gallery into the space below, and beheld by the faint gleam of the fire three or four persons sitting beside a table covered with the remains of a recent carouse. These, the drunken remnant of Huett's companions had evidently "kept the turn of tippling" till they were unable to get to their beds.

After a glance at these revellers he passed on and entered the chamber before mentioned. As he did so, he saw that the old Steward, in obedience to his instructions, had placed a lighted lamp over the ample chimney piece.

Nothing could be more melancholy than the aspect of this apartment, with its dark hangings and sombre furniture, dimly seen by the one light. Its gloomy recesses, seemed the fitting "whereabout" of some fearful spectre, and De Beverstone involuntarily clutched the hilt of his rapier as he entered. And yet with all this as he glanced around, there was an expression of satisfaction in his countenance. He was there alone strong

in heart against the oppressor. For the first time after years passed in war's alarms, he was beneath the roof of her he loved, — to protect — perchance to save her from danger outrage or death. After being satisfied that the apartment contained no other occupant, he quietly stationed himself before the small door by which he entered, so as to cut off all retreat, and remained there like a sentinel on guard.

CHAPTER XVII.

IF ever a man felt the force of the old Eastern caution "to begin nothing without well considering its probable end," that man was Sir Ralph Chavenlay. There he lay a lamentable example of a man of middling abilities fancying himself called upon to take part in overturning a constitution. The predicament into which he had brought his family, was indeed but the situation the whole kingdom was reduced to, under democratic rule.

During those intervals of reason which had visited the poor gentleman, he frequently wept over the miseries around him, and in a sort of maudlin sentimentality, whilst he endeavoured to deprecate all censure for the part he had taken against the King, solicited forgiveness for having brought his family into their present helpless condition. Then again as something of his old spirit

returned, he would cry out for his rapier in order to confront the ruffians who invaded his house.

Under the wholesome councils and care of his wife and daughter, the Knight might possibly have yet recovered, had not the coming of a new source of terror in the shape of a veritable figure, which had been seen by the whole household, completely disorganized his wits.

Thus then on the anniversary of the night on which our story opens, the poor gentleman lay alike bankrupt in mind body and estate, at the mercy of a set of wretches who were practising all sorts of devilry in his despite.

As the midnight hour was proclaimed from the clock without, the sick man slept soundly; deep and heavy was his breathing as he lay in a large tapestried apartment, near the one in which we have seen De Beverstone keeping watch. Alas for state and grandeur! The poor gentlemen slept upon a bed, whose carved cornices were surmounted by the armorial bearings of his crusading ancestors, the hangings were of costly materials, and the very covering was a curiosity from the richness of its elaborate workmanship.

After twenty-four hours of madness in which the patient has constantly raved about the spectre which haunts his imagination, he has fallen into a deep sleep. The leech holds his wrist, and the ladies anxiously watch. It is the crisis of his disease, if allowed to slumber quietly the leech prognosticates that he may awake a new man, and perhaps recover. 'Tis the first wholesome sleep he has had since the day he beheld the execution before Whitehall. A secret horror of the time pervades the sad party, as they listen to the breathing of the sick man, aggravated as their troubles are, by the continued persecution of the man Huett. Lady Chavenlay, a woman of strong mind, suspects the true nature of the annoyance they have lately been subjected to ; her daughter also and the leech are perfectly conscious that the apparition which nightly visits the sick man, is an imposition.

Yet in their helpless condition, they have not the power of hindrance or detection ; the situation, as we have before said, is one of extreme anxiety. The fair Charlotte sits cowering near her mother beside the fire, as the time approaches in which the ghost is wont to

come. The wind howls without, and the snow drives against the casement; suddenly a noise is heard as of heavy footsteps ascending the stairs, — louder and louder, as they approach step by step. The leech starts up, and the ladies hurry to his side; weak as is his arm, his presence is some sort of protection. There is a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, — the chamber door bursts open, and the apparition stalks into the apartment. Sir Ralph, starting from his alumber, with eye-balls glaring, raises himself, and gazes upon the figure, which as usual has the appearance of the executioner who struck off the head of King Charles. It glides by, bending its masked visage upon Sir Ralph. The sick man utters an exclamation of horror, “Ah! the Fiend again,” he says, “the Fiend again. Miserable spirit, thou may’st well wander thus in unrest, for thou hast murdered the most noble amongst mankind.”

The figure stopped and pointed its finger at the knight.

“I know it, I know it,” cried Sir Ralph, “the burthen is here. We are the real murderers, you but the instrument in our hands. Oh horror, horror; what

have I done, what have I done!" And thus speaking, the knight covered his eyes with his hands, and sank back in a swoon, whilst the spectators stood as if transfixed with fear. At length, as the figure slowly turned to leave the chamber, Lady Chavenlay who had been closely observing it, gathered courage to speak.

"This is too gross an attempt," she said, "I now completely recognize in the abominable cheater, thus practising upon my husband's life, the villain Huett. But I will denounce the imposture to your employer; for I doubt even that Cromwell would sanction such pitiful rascality."

It is always dangerous to proclaim any knowledge as to the identity of a robber, whilst engaged in his vocation, as then the murderous intent becomes a fixed resolve; and the lady accordingly found it so; for no sooner had she finished speaking than in place of quitting the apartment the pseudo-ghost turned sharply round, and sprung upon her. The lady uttered no cry of alarm as Huett, for it was indeed he, seized her by the arm, her anger and the contempt she felt for the man were too great to permit her to betray any fear, but the pallor

of her countenance shewed the agony she endured in his iron grasp.

“ You know me,” he said, with set teeth and savage scowl, “ and you will report me to Cromwell ? Be it so, but you shall first take your reward.”

As he said this he drew a petronel from his girdle, and whilst Charlotte made the room echo with her cries, he presented it at the lady’s head.

At that instant the weapon was struck from his hand, and a powerful grasp seizing upon his throat, dragged him backwards, forced him to let go his hold upon his victim, and sent him staggering into the middle of the apartment.

As Huett recovered himself and turned upon his opponent, De Beverstone’s long rapier was opposed to his breast.

The surprize of the ruffian caused him at first to start back, but instantly drawing forth his sword, the pair were at once engaged in a fearful and deadly conflict.

So fierce was the attack of De Beverstone, that his adversary notwithstanding his tremendous strength,

was driven backwards in order to save himself from instant death, for albeit he fought with the most savage resolution, the long square-bladed rapier which De Beverstone used, and which was just then going out of fashion, was a terrific weapon, whilst the ponderous cut and thrust of Huett was comparatively useless against it, when in the hands of one so skilled as the youthful Cavalier.

To parry his rapid thrusts and feints, was almost impossible, to strike him as difficult. The only way to avoid the deadly assault was to spring back at every lunge, and accordingly, in a few minutes, De Beverstone had almost pinned him to the wall.

Still the strong ruffian, who in the agony of half a dozen wounds, used his left hand as well as his right, in the endeavour to save himself, fought like a demon, and at length making a spring like a rat in a corner, caught his opponent in his powerful arms.

The spectators who beheld this combat with feelings of indescribable terror and interest, uttered a piercing cry as they gave the youth up for lost. But De Beverstone was not easily to be baffled. According to the

custom of fencers of the day, in an instant he had shortened the rapier blade in his hand, and like lightning, pierced his opponent through and through.

The grasp of Huett relaxed as the life blood streamed from his wounds, and De Beverstone, with an exertion of strength few would have given him credit for, bore him from the apartment, and carrying him through the chamber in which he had himself kept watch, finally hurled him into the hall beneath.

The noise of this encounter had effectually aroused, not only the sleepers in the Hall, but those of their party who had retired, and the fall of Huett's body filled them with consternation. Some drew their weapons, whilst others sought hastily to obtain a light from the embers of the fire, and in the midst of their dismay at sight of their leader lying in a pool of his own blood, the gallant De Beverstone was amongst them.

"Harkee caitiffs," he said, "I give you but three minutes to quit this hall by yonder door—there lies your leader, dead, deservedly punished for his villany. In yonder dark gallery a dozen matchlocks are pointed at your breasts, one word from me, and I lay every man here a corpse upon the floor.

The party gazed upon De Bevestone in a state of bewildered amazement; they drew together and at first seemed half inclined to obey him. The very fact of his having descended amongst them alone, seemed to proclaim that he must be well supported, although his coming and means of entrance were a mystery. At length as their numbers were augmented by those of their party now assembled from the upper apartments, their hardness returned and they hesitated. De Beverstone saw in an instant that his life was apparently spanned, he grasped the long petronel in his girdle, and made up his mind to die at bay, destroying as many of his adversaries as he could, ere he himself was slain.

Well knowing that many a fortress has been captured by a bold stroke, unaided by any thing but its own audacity, he had thus set his all upon a cast. The chances seemed turning against him, hesitation was ruin. The Cromwellians still stood with weapons bared in a state of savage irresolution; they demanded a parley, an explanation, the why and the wherefore, they were thus to turn out at a moment's notice.

De Beverstone would give them none, he reiterated his threat, and springing upon the man nearest to him, he

clapped the muzzle of the petronel to his ear, vowing that if his fellows did not instantly quit the Hall, his death should prelude the slaughter of all there.

The measure was a bold one; it was indeed De Beverstone's last chance, he felt it so; the next moment and that Hall would be like a slaughter-house; his finger was about to press the trigger, when suddenly the rapid approach of horses was heard upon the hard ground without; swiftly they turned into the court, then came the word to halt. All stood in act to listen. Immediately the noise of many footsteps sounded along the narrow passage, leading from the servant's offices into the Hall, and old Simon Thrift rushed in followed by Sir Felix Falcon and several Cavaliers.

"In time — in time," cried the old Steward, "praise be to Heaven for't — just in time."

"Egad it would seem so indeed," said Sir Felix. "Come my masters," he continued, addressing the Cromwellians, "'shall we imbrue' as Pistol hath it, shall we give you a helping hand into the horse-pond, or will you quit without further circumstance."

The stern Puritans deigned no reply, but sheathed

their swords by way of declining the combat, and as old Thrift unbarred and threw open the main entrance, they fell-in two deep, uplifted their voices, and in dismal tones, as they moved off, sang a psalm.

“Ha! ha!” laughed the lively old knight, “what some of the old gear, eh! Detestable hypocrites,” he added following them, “will not one of ye take a bout at rapier and dagger with an old sinner,” and then giving the last fellow a violent kick as he passed the threshold, he closed and bolted the door.

“By'r Lady, Gaston,” he said as he grasped De Beverstone's hand, “I ought to call you to account for forestalling me here with this carrion, for mine honour has gone halting, any time these twelve months past.”

De Beverstone smiled, “and how came you to the rescue thus opportunely,” he enquired?

“Why it would appear,” said Sir Felix, “that old Thrift somewhat misdoubted your being able to cope with these varlets single-handed, and after parting in the garden he took horse, galloped to my house and advertised me of matters here. In few, he found myself and these gentlemen, my friends, keeping our Christmas.

On hearing his story we left our flaggons for the saddle, and "bloody with spurring, fiery red with haste," here we are—luckily for you—in time. But I pr'ythee good Thrift," he continued, sheathing his rapier and addressing the steward, "announce our coming to the ladies, and request permission for De Beverstone and myself to wait on them, in order to quiet all further alarms."

Our story is now well nigh told. The reader may indeed almost "gather the sequel, by what went before." When De Beverstone and Sir Felix were admitted to a conference with the ladies, they found that Sir Ralph had breathed his last. The excitement of the scene he had witnessed had killed him. The ladies were soon afterwards safely escorted to the mansion of Sir Felix Falcon in Wiltshire, whence they took the earliest opportunity of escaping to France.

As for the gay old Cavalier, Sir Felix, he professed himself so utterly disgusted with the dismal appearance of England under puritanical despotism, that about a year after the events we have just recorded, he vowed he would seek some country where cant and hypo-

crisy were not in fashion. For this purpose, he set out to make the tour of Europe, and taking Paris *en route*, paid his respects, as in duty-bound, to Queen Henrietta Maria, then sojourning at the French Court. He found the sad Queen still mourning for her Royal Husband, whose murder, indeed, according to her own words, she continued to sorrow for, "as if his death had taken place each day she lived."

Notwithstanding, however, that she wore perpetual mourning, both on her person and in her heart, she invited Sir Felix to be present at a wedding which she had felt the greatest interest in forwarding. "If I am myself amongst the most unfortunate of mortals," she added — "'La Malheureuse Reine,' I still love to promote the happiness of those who have been faithful to him I have lost. One who has fought by my husband's side and shared the bitterness of his adversity, is about to be married to the lady of his choice. Come to the Louvre to-night, and you will see two friends made happy."

Sir Felix accordingly attended a magnificent assembly given at the Palace, in honour of a marriage which had

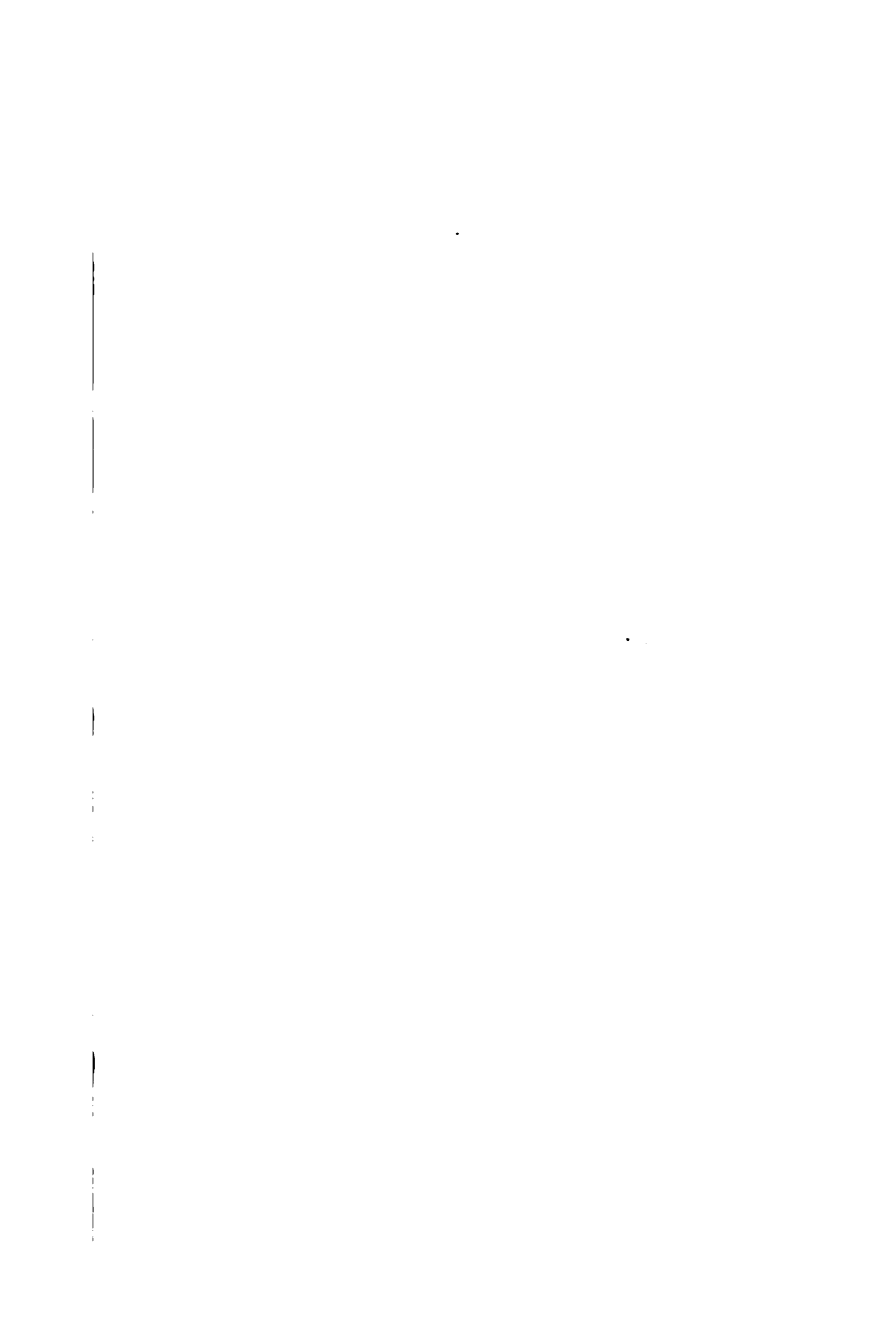
on that evening been solemnized, and at which the young King of England, although in deep mourning, together with many of the grandees of the French Court, were present, and in the bride and bridegroom he recognised the fair Charlotte and Gaston De Beverstone.

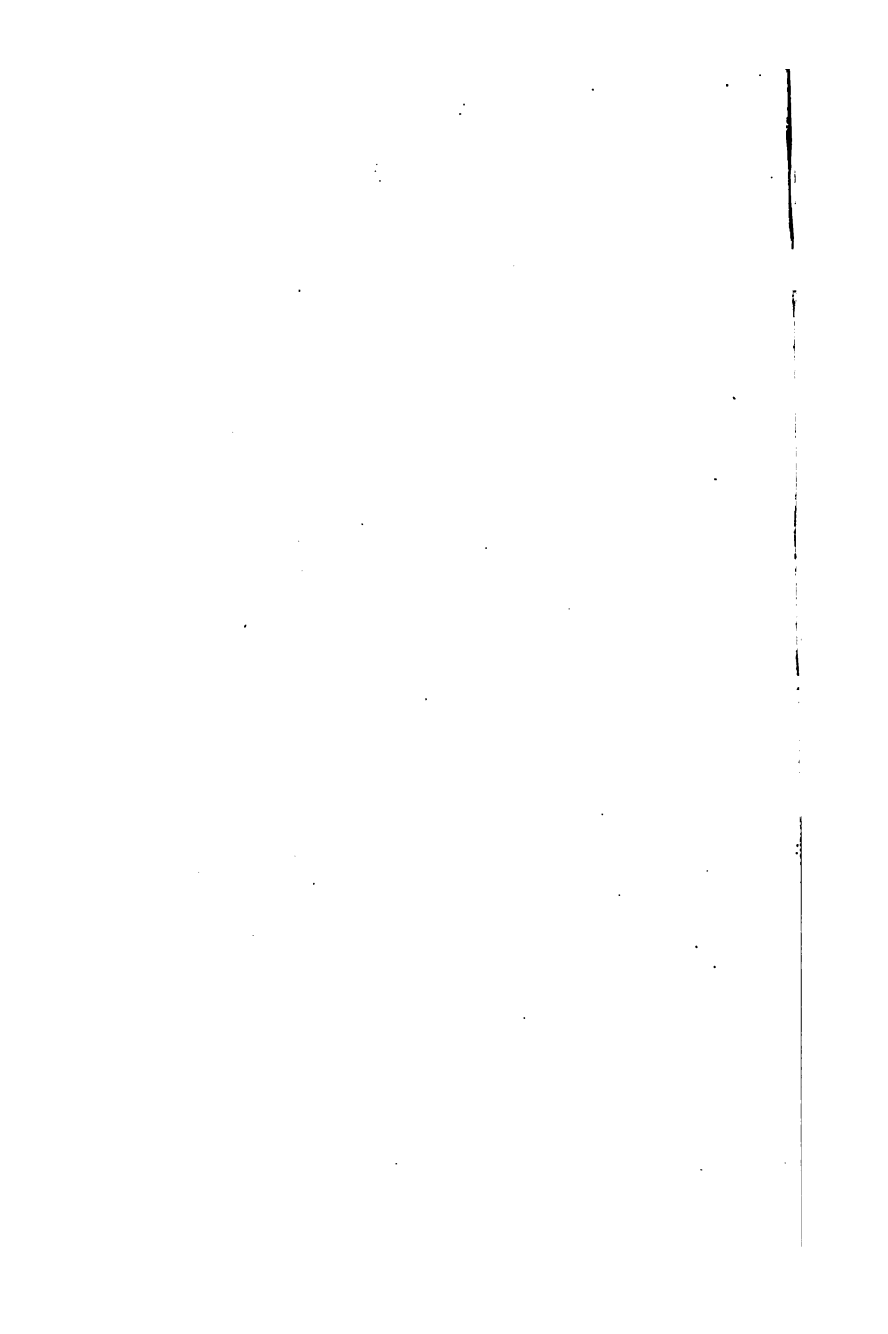
The Hall of Chavenlay for some years exhibited a dark, and severe aspect. The Puritans (who had again usurped dominion over the estate) kept possession during the life of the Protector, consequently many of its doors and windows were bricked up, its ornamental grounds ploughed over, its gardens rank with weeds, and its park cumbered with felled trees. But on occasion of the Restoration it once more "blazed with light, and brayed with minstrelsy." On that year, 1660, Christmas was again celebrated with all the ancient festivities of merry England: and whilst Lady Chavenlay led off the "brawl" with Sir Felix Falcon, followed by De

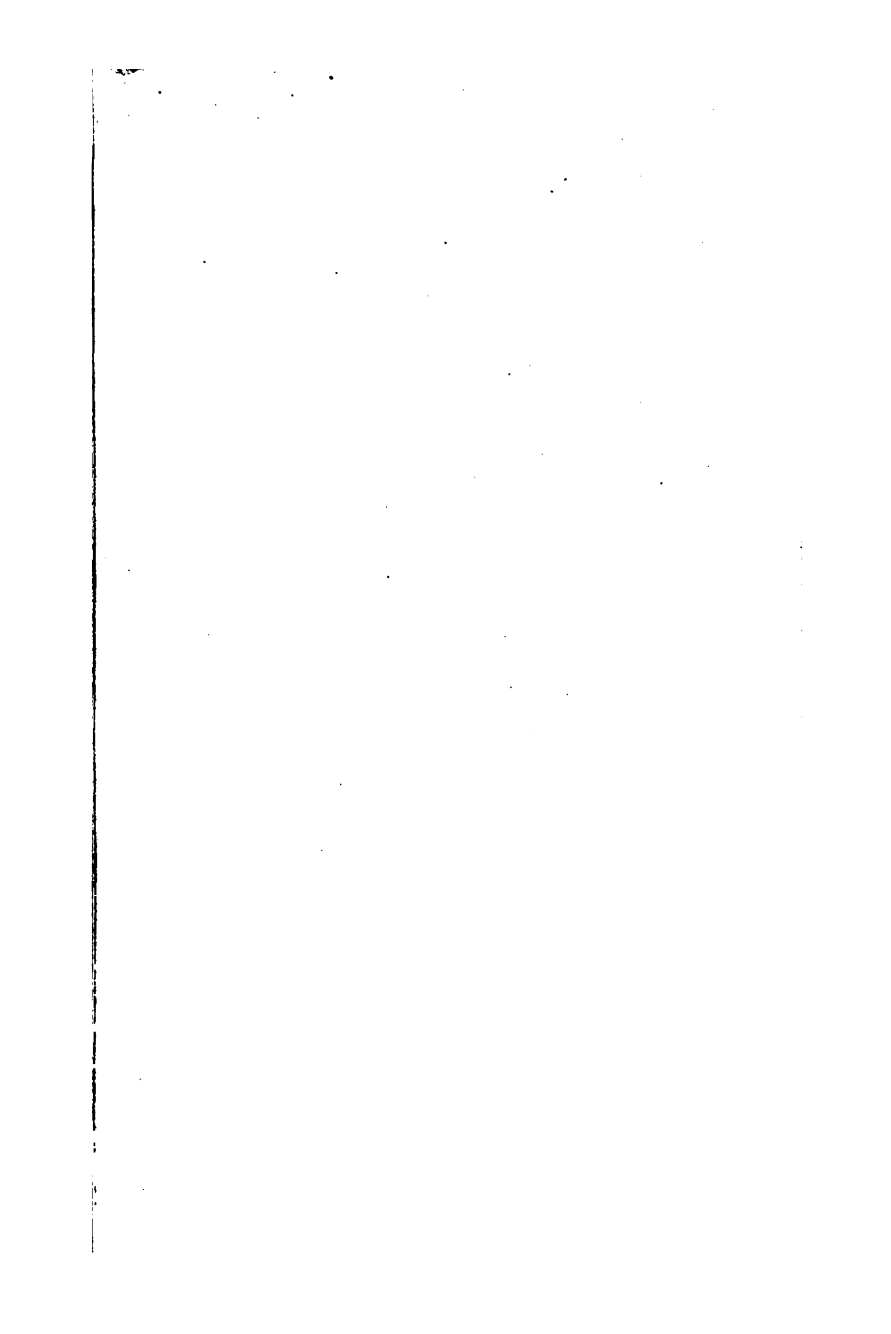
Beverstone and his wife, and a host of Cavaliers and ladies fair. Old Simon Thrift, in all the glory of his restored functions, bustled about and quaffed potations to the renewed prosperity of the family, amongst the most jovial there.

THE END.









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